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JESUS OF NAZARETH

PREFACED BY A SKETCH

OF

JEWISH HISTORY

BY

EDWARD CLODD



REVISED EDITION

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PREFACE

THE object of this book is to present in compendious form a sketch of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, viewed from a purely historical standpoint.

It is hoped that the book will be found of service to those who, unable to follow in detail the application of the historic method of inquiry into the writings composing the Bible, are desirous to know what the "higher criticism," as it is called, has to offer as a consistent and adequate explanation of the career of Jesus. Moreover, the book is a serious endeavour to show that reverence for his character, and sympathy with the general spirit of his teaching, are unaffected by the rejection of the mythical and speculative elements which have mingled with the narratives of his life, and from which supernatural theories about him have been deduced.

Its preparation has involved the reading and consulting of books too numerous and varied to catalogue, but the foot-notes indicate generally the authorities to whom I am under obligation. My indebtedness should, however, be specially acknowledged to Kuenen's great work on the *Religion of Israel*, and to Keim's *Jesus of Nazara*; while the material gathered in Hausrath's *New Testament Times* has been of service in the account given of the circumstances surrounding Jesus. I take advantage of this opportunity to commend to persons interested in the subject Knappert's excellent summary of Kuenen's volumes, and also the more important and often suggestive series entitled *The Bible for Young People*, which the competent pen of Mr. Philip Wicksteed has translated from the Dutch.

E. C.

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PART I.

A SKETCH OF JEWISH HISTORY

I.—INTRODUCTORY

At a date which remains uncertain, but which some historians place about the middle of the sixteenth century before Jesus was born, the forefathers of the Jewish people had, after many wanderings, pitched their tents in the rich pasture lands of Goshen, on the north-eastern borders of Egypt.

Like every other race of mankind which has advanced, they had risen by slow steps from a savage state, but as yet had reached no very high level, being shepherd tribes, rude and war-like in their habits and coarse in their beliefs and customs. They were under no fixed form of government, each tribe being ruled in loose fashion by the head of the oldest family, from whom the rest traced their descent. These sheikhs, or, as we call them, patriarchs (from a Greek word meaning "father-chief"), met together for common counsel and action when danger from without threatened the clans, and maintained peace and settled quarrels among them as they best could in those lawless times. For strife would frequently arise over coveted green spots whereon to pasture flocks and herds, and snap the slender ties that held such roving folk together.

In common with other roaming hordes of kindred race and speech then scattered over the desert plains stretching from Syria towards Persia, they were known as "Hebrews," which probably means "men from the other side," as we name other nations "foreigners" (Latin, *foras*), meaning "men from abroad," literally, "out of doors"; but they called themselves

"children" or "sons of Israel," after one of their most renowned, and probably mythical, forefathers, about whom they had a legend telling of his victorious struggle with one of their chief gods.¹ Since the time when they were freed from their captivity in Babylon they have been known as "Jews,"² a corruption of the word "Yehudim," or descendants of Judah.

The legend just spoken of is one among many proofs that, like other barbarous people, the Israelites, as we will for the present call them, had myths about the past, some of which we find common to races to whom they were related, the Hebrew legends excelling all the rest in the simple yet stately language in which their later forms are cast. Myths are the outcome of the wonder aroused in man by all that he sees and feels; they are the answers, very real to him, which in his childlike bewilderment and utter lack of knowledge he frames to the questions, "Whence came all these things? Whence came we? What took place before us? How did we come by our name?"

We who have left this myth-making stage far behind have learnt, or should learn, as answer to the last of these questions—for the story is no dull or dry one—that the names of countries or of people, who, as making up tribes and nations are commonly called after the place where they live, were not given

¹ Gen. xxxii. 24-28.

² Josephus, *Antiquities*, book xi., ch. v.

INTRODUCTORY

hazard, but often hold within them some story of the dim and dateless past which no other record remains, or describe some vanished or abiding feature of the land that most struck its first beholders. Men in bygone days had neither the skill to look for nor the aids to find the true meanings of the names which they bore, and, often led astray by false likenesses between words, framed strange stories to explain them. For example, the well-known legend of the wicked Bishop Hatto, whose great stores of corn, which he would not part with in time of famine, were eaten by rats, and who, fleeing to his tower in the Rhine, was pursued and eaten by those vermin, arises from confusing "maut-thurm," or "customs-tower," with "mause-thurm," or "rat-tower." And in a still more famous legend,¹ probably derived from the same source as the story of Paradise, which grew around the ruins of the mighty Tower of Babel, the Hebrew narrator mistook that name, which signifies "gate of god," for the verb "balbel," meaning "to confound." One chief source of myths about names springs from the confusion which races at a low level make between them and persons or things.² For example, the savage who shrinks from having his likeness taken, in the fear that a part of himself is being carried away thereby, regards his name as something through which he may be harmed or bewitched. So he will use all sorts of roundabout phrases to avoid saying it, will fear that any one seeking to know it may steal it or gain power over him, will give his children horrid names to frighten demons away, will change his own name, thinking thereby to elude his foes and puzzle or cheat even death when he comes to look for him, and will shrink from uttering the name of a dead man lest it call up the ghost! The Bible supplies examples of relics of such savage notions lingering

¹ Gen. xi. 9.

² For numerous examples of this see the author's *Tom Tit Tot: An Essay on Savage Anthropology* (1898).

among the Jews in the importance which they accorded to names, finding in them omens of events and even in their sounds mystic meanings, while they were not only careful what they called their children, but believed that a man's fate might be changed by changing his name. Their use, too, of another word instead of "Yahwè" (commonly spelt "Jehovah") for their chief god, like the Mohammedan use of "Allah," which is only a title for the "great name," may be traced to the dislike which causes savages to shrink from uttering the names of superhuman beings. Names never being treated by barbarous people merely as signs by which things are known, we see how a tribe, in accounting for its name, could not think of it apart from a *person*, and hence invented its tales of a great ancestor, father and founder of his people. Fathers and founders, of course, every people had; but so remote are man's beginnings that it was not possible for him to know aught as to whence or from whom he sprang; wherein results the play of fancy about these matters, and the birth of myths.

Among rude races, as the North American Indians, whom we find named after some animal, as Bear, Beaver, Wolf, the tribes claim the very creatures themselves as ancestors! The nations of Europe had, during the Middle Ages, quite a craze for tracing their origin to heroes of the Trojan war, as France from Francus, Paris from the son of Priam, Britain from Brutus, and the Greeks, the ancient name of whose country was Hellas, guessed that Hellen was their forefather. In like manner we British, who are sometimes called in poetry "sons of Albion," might have made a similar blunder had we not learned it at Albion was the name given to our island, more than two thousand years ago, as a "hilly land."

Now, the oldest parts of the written history of the Israelites have preserved traces of a like confusion in their minds as to the source of their tribal and other names, some of which, as the tiniest

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apter of Genesis shows, are names of countries,¹ and, here and there, of the powers of nature transformed into patriarchs and heroes. But passing by the details concerning these, it suffices to say that they derived their origin and that of kindred peoples from forefathers who dwelt in the land of Shinar, or, using the Greek name given to it from its lying "between rivers," Mesopotamia. Their common ancestor was said to be Terah, who lived at Ur, and whose three sons were Abraham, Nahor, and Haran. Terah removed from Ur to Charran, and thence his sons and their families spread southward. The Israelites believed themselves to be in direct line from Abraham, the father of Isaac and grandfather of Jacob, afterwards called Israel, and the twelve tribes, into which they were said to be divided, traced their descent from Israel's twelve sons.

The theory which resolves all the gods and heroes of antiquity into sun and storm myths has run into such wild excesses as to bring into discredit what terms of truth may lie therein. Professor Oldzihier's equation of the twelve sons of Jacob with the twelve signs of the zodiac, and Herr Winckler's theory that Abraham is a lunar hero, rest, as do most of Professor Max Müller's suggestions about the names of gods and heroes, on a fantastic philology. Nevertheless, every modern authority, and among such are to be included popularly divines of the Church of England, agree that the story of the patriarchs given in the Old Testament is probably, wholly legendary. To cite the words of one high authority, Canon river, "modern discovery has shown that Palestine had inhabitants before the Mosaic age; that Babylonians, Egyptians, and Canaanites visited it, or made it their home; but that the Hebrew patriarchs lived in it there is no tittle of monumental evidence whatever."²

¹ E.g., Cush, Assur, Migrain, Canaan, Aphaxad, and of cities, as Sidon. ² *Authority and Archaeology*, p. 149.

Let us see what groundwork of fact underlies these legends of origins.

The Israelites belonged to the Semitic race, or, to use its Latin form, Semitic race, so called after Shem, whose name occurs as a son of the patriarch Noah in the Bible legend of a deluge. Such a term does not correctly describe them, but its meaning is now so fixed that its use cannot mislead us. It includes the Babylonians, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Syrians, Hebrews, Arabs, and some lesser peoples, the kinship between all of whom is now well proven; while history is ever yielding witness to the mighty part which its leading members have played in the world; how rich and varied their influence on the life and thought of men has been to this day, notably in religion, for from them have sprung the Jewish, Christian, and Mohammedan faiths, with their sacred books, the Bible and the Korân.

The earliest traces that we have of the Semites show them scattered over Arabia and Syria, and from the uplands of Armenia to the countries watered by the Tigris and Euphrates. The cradle of the Semitic race remains undetermined, but, in the view of the latest authorities, it has to be sought for in North Africa.³ That region was probably the primitive home of both Hamites and Semites, who are believed to be of one stock. From thence, at a period which may date from the Neolithic or Newer Stone Age, the Semites, with whom we are here concerned, migrated eastwards, reaching South Arabia by the "easy communication afforded between the continents of Africa and Asia at the head of the Gulf of Aden."⁴ Amid the deserts and oases of Arabia there were developed the racial characteristics of the Semites, "intensity of faith, ferocity, exclusiveness, and imagination."⁴ From that centre these nomadic folk spread north

¹ Appendix; note A.

² Cf. Prof. Barton's *Sketch of Semitic Origins*, chap. i.

³ Prof. Keane, *Man: Past and Present*, p. 400.

⁴ Prof. Sayce, *Assyrian Grammar*, p. 13.

and east, becoming specialised as Babylonians, Phœnicians, Aramaeans, Canaanites, and so forth, while a considerable remnant remained in the old home, some as dwellers in towns, and others under conditions represented by the Bedawi, or Bedouins, of the present day. And it is in these south-western portions of Asia that the Semitic peoples have played their chief part in ancient history. Those who migrated into Mesopotamia found there an older and alien population, known as "Akkadians," or "highlanders," because coming from the mountains of Elam, settled in the land. These Akkado-Sumerians, whom it is not easy to classify, but who appear to have been allied to the race whence such peoples as the Mongols and Finns have sprung, had made their home in those fertile parts long before the Semites had separated—long before even Egypt had reached her prime ; had founded kingdoms, built cities, among which was Ur, sacred to Sin, their moon-god, and reached no mean state of culture. They were the fathers of astronomy, for the clear air and unbroken expanse of their boundless plains invited to the study of the heavens ; we owe to them both the signs of the Zodiac and the days of the week, which last were named after the sun, moon, and five planets ; while, following the phases of the moon, whom they called the "lord of rest," every seventh and some intervening days were sabbaths, on which certain works were forbidden, mainly so as bringing ill-luck to the doer. It appears certain that the institution of the sabbath is of Akkadian origin, although not then as a rest-day for man, but as "a day when the gods rested from their anger." "Every day of the year was under the protection of some deity or saint ; the months were all named after the signs of the Zodiac,"¹ in the first of which the god Bel, so runs the legend, reminding us of that about Abraham and Isaac, offered up his only son. The wedge-shaped characters, called "cunei-

form" (from Latin "cuneus," a wedge), stamped on clay tablets and cylinders, were their invention, and among the precious relics of their vast libraries, entombed for centuries, is a poem in twelve books, answering to the months of the year, the eleventh, or "rainy," having for its subject the legend of a deluge from which a like legend in the book of Genesis is derived.

Other fragments supply proof of their advance from lower to higher stages of belief. They point to a time when good and evil spirits were thought to dwell in everything around, and when the aid of sorcerers, with their charms and magic arts, was sought to secure the favour of the good spirits and avert the anger of the evil spirits. In the course of time these beings were arranged into classes, some being placed above the rest and worshipped, often with bloody sacrifices, as rulers, both male and female, over certain parts of nature, as sun-gods, moon-gods, storm and lightning gods. Among the first-named we read of Marduk or Merodach, helper of mankind and bringer of the dead to life, akin to the Egyptian Osiris and other mythical mediators between earth and heaven, to whom man in his deep need has stretched forth hands and prayed.

Such creation of gods out of the lesser spirits of the older worship, which is in keeping with the mode of advance among higher races towards belief in one almighty being, was quickened by the blending of the religion of the Akkadians with that of the Semites. This gave rise to numberless hymns of penitence and praise which breathe a spirit akin to some of the Hebrew psalms, as well as to mythical poems about the gods, from which many later legends are derived. And long after the Akkadian language was dead, these hymns, venerated as sacred writings, were recited by Babylonian priests in that old tongue, as the Roman Catholic priests use Latin in the services of their Church ; while the ancient directions about spells and incantations passed, through the Chaldean

¹ Sayce's *Babylonian Literature*, p. 55.

into the common belief of the Semites, overran Europe, and became the parent of the grim beliefs which made life a terror for hundreds of years, and which lurk in many by-ways among the unlearned yet.

Nor, happily, only these, for from Western Asia—of which the old legends, ever holding some truth worth the seeking, tell as the happy home of the parents of mankind and the birthland of culture—have come the germs of much of the art, science, and higher as well as lower religions of both Jew and Gentile; while many of the beliefs, customs, and traditions of the Akkadians, borrowed by the Semites, were carried by them westward, thus becoming the possession of Greeks and Romans, and, through them, of the modern world.

Such is a brief outline of a portion of the rich knowledge which has within the last few years come to light about the foundation on which some elements in the civilisation of both the Semitic and the Aryan-speaking races rests. The wedge-shaped characters on clay tablets, once mistaken for ornamental figures or charms, or attributed even to the action of worms, have yielded their secrets to the patience of man; the daily life and manners of great empires of the East, of which classic historians speak only in vague hints, are before us in all their detail, and we are brought face to face with men who have hitherto been but names on the pages of the Old Testament, and of Greek and Roman writers.

The more intimate connection between the Jews and Babylonians in later times is warrant for inclusion of the foregoing brief account of the ancient civilisation which largely influenced the Babylonian. Conquerors of the Akkadians, the Babylonians were in turn conquered by the Assyrian power. But, without further

¹ Admixture has long since effaced any distinctive Aryan race; the term can be applied only to peoples speaking varieties of the same family of language, or Aryan mother-tongue.

comment, we must resume the story of the fortunes of the tribes from whom the Israelites sprang.

Our knowledge of the beginnings of this remarkable people remains vague; the facts underlying their legends are hard to reach, the more so as we have only the floating traditions of a nomadic folk; in other words, history before it has taken definite shape. But it is agreed that, wherever the original home of the Semitic race may have been, the earliest traces of the ancestors of the Hebrews are found in the region lying south and east of Palestine; a region of rolling plains, once the bed of a great inland sea, but, at the time of our story, strewn, as now, after the winter rains, with grass and bright flowers, and still the home of Bedouins and their flocks, in mode of life scarce altered during thousands of years. Their manners and customs witness to the truth of the charming pictures of patriarchal times that enrich the Old Testament; revelling in their unpolluted air and boundless plains, and jealous of their freedom, they despise the cramped life of towns, and it is among them that we may look for such stray relics as survive of the religion of the Semites while they were yet one people.

From these plains, as the herbage grew scantier and the waterbrooks dried, the Hebrews passed, some to the uplands of the Jordan, and others, among whom were the "sons of Israel," which name, at a later date, embraced all Hebrews, to the borders of Egypt—that is, within the land of Goshen—"that just divides the desert from the sown," which probably stretched along the eastern bank of the Nile.

Here, then, we reach the point whence we started; but we must tarry yet awhile in sight of pyramids and temples to learn what we can about the religion of the Israelites at this time.

A barbarous people cannot have other than a gross religion, and we may argue from the state of the Israelites what stage of belief they had reached. But,

part from this, religions, like manners, and customs, and languages, always preserve some of their older features; and from these we learn that the Israelites, when in Goshen, were worshippers of the powers of nature, as the sun, moon, and stars, and of lower things, such as trees and stones, which were either looked upon as superhuman or as the dwelling-place of such beings. No worship has prevailed more widely throughout the world at one time or another than that of stones; hundreds of years after the Israelites had left Goshen we find their yielding to it a cause of reproach and scorn from men of loftier belief.¹ The famous Black Stone at Mecca, adored by the ancient Arabs, is still dear and sacred to Mohammedans, while as late as the eleventh century we find prohibition of stone-worship, both in our own island and on the Continent.

But the idolatry which has had early and lasting place among desert tribes is that of the host of heaven. The scenery amid which a people lives gives its impress to their religion; and while dwellers among mountains and forests hear the voices of spirits in the rustling of the leaves and the echoes from the hill-sides, and see their fleeting forms in the shadows, the eye of man in the flat and changeless desert is drawn upwards to the stars, on whose rising and setting his own life appears to depend, and on whose place in the sky his own fate to be fixed. While worship of the sun, brightest of them all, has been widespread, leaving its traces among our own and other great religions in strange and undreamed-of ways, it is interesting to note that the moon seems to have had earlier homage paid her among desert tribes.² The reason of this is that, as the well-being of such folk depends on their cattle, the sun-

god was to them an evil power, because he dried up the streams and withered the grass and herb. Not so the moon, ruling at night, when the cool breezes blew, the kindly dew fell, and the welcome shade was overhead, so that the wanderers might travel unblinded by the noonday glare, unwearyed by its heat. Her waning saddened and alarmed them, while the new moon was greeted with feasting, and the moment of her birth flashed, centuries after the Israelites had settled in Canaan, by fire-signal from hill to hill. Such friends, too, were the star-gods, guiding the travellers aright, making known the coming of the rains and the changes of the seasons; but when the wanderer became a tiller of the soil and needed the heat to ripen his corn and fruits, the powers of the night-sky fell into the second place. As an example of this, the Israelites who settled as husbandmen in Canaan adopted the worship of the sun-gods as givers of plenty, while those who remained nomads clung to the older belief.

Although different ideas about their gods arose as the tribes reached different states of culture, the underlying elements of primitive nature-worship remained. Sometimes the same power was regarded in a two-fold aspect. That is to say, the sun would be worshipped at one time as giver of fruitfulness, and at another time feared and appeased as a destroying power, the one aspect or the other holding, as the feelings of the worshipper might prompt, the chief place in feast and frantic dance or bloody sacrifice under groves or, more often, on "high places." For there the fancy of man has fixed the earthly dwelling of the heaven-gods, as on Sinai among the Hebrews, Asgard among the Norsemen, Alborz among the Persians, Meru among the Hindus, and Olympus among the Greeks.

While the Israelites were in Goshen a chief place appears to have been given to El-Shaddai, the Strong or Mighty one, a god not beaming with

¹ Kuenen, *Religion of Israel*, vol. i., pp. 270, 390.

² Isa. lvii. 6; Jer. ii. 27; Hosea iv. 12.

³ Goldziher's *Mythology among the Hebrews*, p. iv. *passim*.

sunny grace and gladness of some of the Aryan deities, but a fierce and withering desert-god, awakening awe, but never love, in his worshippers. When, centuries afterwards, he gave place to Yahwè, loftier ideas had arisen about him ; but he remained the same stern and dreadful one, whom none could look on and live,¹ who rode on the clouds, announced his approach in the thunderclap and appeared amid fires and lightnings,² a god to whom was dedicated and often slain the firstborn of man and beast. Long after the Israelites had left Goshen they continued to appease him with horrid rites, and to ascertain his will by lot and sooth-saying ; the old notions about him enter into the latest form in which the historical books of the Old Testament are cast ; he is there spoken of as acting like a man, walking in a garden,³ coming down from the sky to spy out what people are doing,⁴ writing with his finger,⁵ repenting that he had made man,⁶ acting, too, as a *bad* man, approving cunning and deceit,⁷ commanding the slaughter of women and children,⁸ and praised as a "man of war,"⁹ at whose bidding the revolting cruelties of the Israelites under their chieftains and early kings were committed. For, since the god in whom a man believes stands in his mind for what seems to him the highest and the best, he strives to copy him in the things which he does, thereby both obeying and honouring him. In the sacrifices with which he has everywhere sought, as with gifts, to win the favour of his gods or avert their anger, we find the notion widespread that they partake of the essence of the offering. The solid part is seen to remain untouched ; it is the incense of fragrant spices, the "sweet

savour"¹⁰ of burning sacrifices, and the blood, which is "the life," that the gods are thought to enjoy. Among the hot-blooded Semites, children of the desert sun, we find the sacrifice of life—of human life too, its choicest form—prevailing. In Canaan children were offered to Molech in the belief that the yielding of one's dearest was well pleasing to the god, and needful to ward off trouble from the land. Indeed, at the heart of this ghastly custom there lies the truth that the thing most precious to us must be yielded ; only until long years had passed did men learn that this is not in blood and death, but in the surrender of self-love and self-will for the good of our kind. In Phoenicia and its famous colony, Carthage, the fairest and best-born were offered in time of distress, and long after the Israelites had left Goshen their worship of Jehovah was stained with the blood of man. In one touching story we read of a father who, going forth to war, vowed, in accordance with the old custom of promising the god a present if an undertaking succeeded,¹¹ to offer to Jehovah whatever should first greet him on his return, if he gained the victory. As he came back from the battle which he had won, who should come forth to meet him in gladness but his dear and only daughter ! Yet would not the sad father break his oath, but, after giving his child leave to withdraw for a while to weep and pray, "did with her according to his vow which he had vowed."¹²

Before leaving this somewhat dim and misty part of Israel's history for surer ground, let us gather into a few words the sum of what has been said.

The Israelites were of Semitic race, the original home of which was probably in North Africa. From thence certain tribes crossed to South Arabia, tribe after tribe spreading themselves northwards from Syria to the Armenian

¹ Exod. xix. 21, xxxiii. 20.

² Exod. xix. 16-18, xxiv. 17 ; Psalm xviii. 8.

³ Gen. iii. 8. ⁴ Gen. xi. 5-7, xviii. 20, 21.

⁵ Exod. xxxi. 18. ⁶ Gen. vi. 6.

⁷ Gen. xxvii., xxviii.; 1 Kings xxii. 21-23.

⁸ Deut. vii. 2, 16; 1 Sam. xv. 2, 3.

⁹ Exod. xv. 3; Numb. xxi. 14.

¹⁰ Gen. viii. 21.

¹¹ Gen. xxviii. 20-22.

¹² Judges xi. 30-39. For parallels to the story see *Encyclopædia Biblica*, art. "Jephthah."

mountains. Such of them as found no settled abode, or cared to find none, wandered to and fro as shepherd-tribes, among these being the forefathers of the Israelites, who, in their search after "green pastures beside still waters," finally reached the rich grazing lands stretching between Egypt¹ and Syria. They were at that time divided into clans, rough and warlike in their habits,

and in their religion worshippers of both sun and stones, paying, however, chief honour to nature gods of the type of El the Strong, whose worship was attended with bloody sacrifices. But no uniform set of beliefs, customs, or ideas prevailed among such loosely united folk, whose roaming life tended to bring about unlikeness in their manners and notions.

II.—THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT

EGYPT is a long, ribbon-like strip of fertile land in the north-east corner of Africa, bordered on either side by low and barren hills, which on the west protect it from the blinding sandstorms of the Libyan desert, and on the east separate it from the narrow waters of the Red Sea.

It is in truth the ancient bed of the Nile, "the gift," as Herodotus² calls it, of that mighty river which, supplied by the outpour of great lakes in Central Africa, flows through an expanse of rock and desert, and, broken here and there into splendid cataracts, at last enters the fissure along which it has spread a layer of fruitful soil. In the autumn of every year its waters, swollen by melting snows and tropical rains, flood the valley, leaving as they recede a rich mud for cultivation by the peasants, a down-trodden race, whose improved condition dates only from 1884, when Great Britain undertook the control of Egyptian affairs. The Nile valley, the like of which is found nowhere else in the world, is but a few miles wide until it nears the coast, where the many-mouthed river has spread its deposits into a fan-shaped plain called the delta,

from its resemblance in form to the Greek letter Δ.

As abundant relics prove, Egypt, like every other habitable country, passed through the barbaric period known as the Ancient Stone Age, while, situated as it is on the line of march from one great continent to another, it became the coveted prize of successive races, the last and most vigorous of whom were the founders of the famous dynasties which begin with Menes (4777 B.C.). These may have "entered the country from the Red Sea, across the desert at Koptos. But to trace their origin further must be a matter of speculation until research has opened up the history of the Red Sea region."³

The Egyptians shared the weakness which causes nations and families to exalt themselves by proof of ancient or noble descent, for we find that, like the Chaldaeans, Chinese, Hindus, and other people, they had piled up more or less fabulous accounts of royal gods whose reigns stretched over tens of thousands of years; but, when these are cast aside there is abundant proof left that their kingdom was a mighty one many centuries before the Israelites arrived i

¹ Book II. 5.

² Prof. W. M. Flinders Petrie, *A History of Egypt*, vol. i., p. 4 (1903 edition).

Goshen. Some of the huge royal tombs called pyramids were erected as far back as nearly four thousand years B.C., and the priests of Sais, when Solon came to visit their temple, said to him with truth, "You Greeks are but children." For the knowledge and skill and control of men which are needed for vast structures come not ready to hand, and long ages pass before men are able, from roughly piling stones into cairns and circles, to progress to the erection of shapely tombs and stately temples.

The king, or "Pharaoh,"¹ that being his common title, was worshipped as one of the gods, and ranked among them after his death. The whole of the land was treated as his, one-third of it, according to one account, being taxed for the support of the priests, who, to make the more sure of so large a share, pretended, with the cunning of their craft, that it had been so decreed by the goddess Isis when she dwelt among men.

The picture-writings and paintings on tombs and temple walls, which the very dry climate has kept from decay, tell us the thoughts, and set before us in minutest detail the daily life, of men in the valley of the Nile six or perchance seven thousand years ago. But the old and the new so mingled in their religion that much remains to be put in order before we may hope to get clear ideas both of its secret and open features, and any account of it is at best but patchwork. We know that each nome or province had its gods, who, within their territorial limits, were supreme, and who were grouped in series of threes or multiples of three, a cycle of nine deities being called an "ennead." The most famous "triad" was Osiris, Isis, and Horus. Around Osiris there gathered touching legends of his mission to earth to bless men, of his death for their sakes at the

hands of the god of darkness, of his resurrection and office as judge of the dead. He was one of many names for the sun; indeed, speaking broadly, the Egyptian religion was a worship of that orb under the many aspects which he wore from rising to setting, and in his yearly course through the heavens. In the life-giving powers battling with the powers of darkness, the river god with the sand-blinding Typhon, the day with the night, the same story meets us which attends the nature-worshipping stage of every people. The scenery of their solemn landscape lent its impress to the fixed, awful majesty of the Egyptian gods, among the crowd of whom we seem to catch sight now and again of one loftier than the rest, but all is vague. These deities were not only carved in stone, but worshipped through living animals in whom their spirits were believed to dwell, doubtless a survival in higher form of ancient animal-worship. Chief among these were sacred bulls, which with other creatures had honour paid them while living, their bodies, like those of the Egyptians themselves, being embalmed after death to preserve them from decay. The worship of Apis, the sacred bull of Memphis, dates from the oldest period of Egyptian history. He was believed "to have been begotten by a deity descending as a ray of moonlight on the cow which was to become the mother of the sacred beast; hence he was regarded as the son of the god."²

But low ideas of the gods may co-exist with high conceptions of a man's duty to his fellows, and among the Egyptians we find an exalted code of morals, in which honour to parents, kindness to the needy, and the love of truth were enjoined. They were a gay and cheerful folk, who sobered their pleasures with thoughts of an after-life and judgment, of which very full accounts survive. According to the "Ritual of the Dead," the soul, when it descended with the

¹ Not from "P.^{ra}," "the sun," as is often said, but from "Pir'āw," "the great house"; as in Turkey the "Porte," meaning "gate," is applied to the supreme power; as, too, in England we say "the court" for "the judge."

² Wiedemann's *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. 188.

coming sun to Amenti, the hidden land beyond the western hills, had to recite, before it was weighed in the hall of justice, the sins into which it had not fallen and the good deeds it had wrought, declaring, in words which remind us of those said to have been used by Jesus in his account of a last judgment, "I have fed the hungry, clothed the naked," etc., and, if thus justified, was clad in a white robe and admitted to the heavenly places.

Below the soldiers, who ranked next to the priests, and below the lower classes of freemen, there were vast numbers of slaves, comprising in the reign of Ramses II. fully one-third of the entire population. From earlier times men had learnt that it was more gainful to set captives to work than to kill them, and hence out of war arose slavery. But the case with which strong nations could thus get supplies of labour was one, among other causes, which led them to think lightly of human life, and to treat their bondsmen more harshly than cattle, which it was costlier to replace. Whenever the numbers fell off, the Egyptian soldiers went negro-hunting or made raids upon the border tribes, and it was by forced labour alone that the canals were cut, lakes dug, tombs and temples and cities raised. On some of the wall paintings, in colours still fresh and bright, the slaves are seen at their grinding tasks, while overseers, whom no sight of suffering moved to pity, stand armed with long whips, ready to lash the toilers who slackened in their work or sank fainting beneath it.

Now, although the word "Hebrew" has not yet been found among the Egyptian records, and although the Old Testament narrative of the Exodus has no support from any known monumental evidence, or any other source, the statements as to some hard and oppressive treatment of the Israelites when in Goshen seem to have a basis of fact. It appears to have occurred during the later years of their sojourn, in the reign of Ramses II., one of the

greatest of the Pharaohs, of whom it is said that he "made Egypt anew." During a long and brilliant reign (1275-1208 B.C.) he carried on many wars against the powerful Hittites and other Syrian peoples, his victories over whom were the theme of prize poems; while, as bringing so remote a name somewhat nearer to us, his titles may be read on the so-called "Cleopatra's Needle," which, in unmeaning relation to its surroundings, now stands on the northern bank of the Thames. The precise causes which led to the oppression of the Israelites are not clear, but we know that the Pharaoh would have little scruple in forcing them to taskwork, and, moreover, would view their increase with disfavour, remembering how, in bygone centuries, a barbaric folk had invaded the land, and ruled it as the famous "Shepherd-kings" for five centuries. Be the causes what they may, the lives of the "sons of Israel" were "made bitter in all manner of service in the field," and in the building or enlarging of the great temple cities, Ramses and Pithom.

Such loss of freedom was the more galling to a people who had lived the untethered life of the desert, and at last the burdens laid upon them so increased that they plotted to escape. The common trouble drew the tribes together; the times favoured them, for Ramses was dead and Merenptah, his son, was busy quelling outbreaks among his people; friendly tribes were around; while, chiefest of all, the very leader whom such a daring movement needed to ensure its success appeared in Moses, one of the noblest men that ever lived; with whom, says a learned Jew, who admits that the patriarchs are mythical, "the historic period begins."¹ By the time that the account of his life was set down in Jewish history, many legends akin to those of other heroes had been interwoven with it; but when these are cast aside there abides for the love and reverence of men the story of one who

¹ Montefiore. *Hibbert Lectures*, 1892, p. 5

put away thought and care for self, one full of tender pity for his stricken race, of iron will to help them, and, what nerved him most for the struggle against the chariots and horsemen of the Pharaoh, inspired by the belief that he had the direct command of Jehovah, to bring forth his "people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."¹

The compiler of the book of Exodus, which, as we have it, dates from about 450 B.C., tells us that Moses had fled into Midian after having, in defence of an Israelite, slain an Egyptian. "Forty years"² after this the god whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had worshipped as El-Shaddai the Strong made himself known as Yahwè or Yahveh, translated "the Lord" in our Bibles, in contradistinction to "Elōhim," which is translated "God." Its origin and primitive meaning are unknown; probably it was not an unfamiliar name among the Semites; but all that can be said is that, when the book of Exodus took its final form, Yahwè had become connected with the idea of "being" in a more abstract sense than was possible in earlier times.³

Beyond the simple fact that the Exodus, as it is called (from Greek words meaning "going out"), took place under the leadership of Moses, probably in the reign of Merenptah, all is clouded with legend. As years rolled away and the great event which coloured and shaped Israel's wonderful career loomed from the distance, everything about it was listed into the marvellous; the details of the stirring story grew as fathers told it to their children, and as minstrels made it the burden of their songs. It was said that the god of Israel sent plague after plague, ten in all, upon Egypt; swarms of frogs, flies, locusts, lice, the river turned into blood, hail and lightning, darkness, grievous sores on man and cattle, and, at last, death in every home, because the stub-

born Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go. Also that when, repenting of the consent to their departure which the plagues wrung from him, he pursued them, the waters through which they had to pass divided and "were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left," so that they crossed in safety. Then the waters returned on the Egyptians and "covered the chariots and horsemen and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them."

These tales of the wonderful are as a veil covering, yet not concealing, the features of the story, which stand out when looked at in the light of knowledge of the ills to which Egypt is now and again subject. The Nile is sometimes red and unpleasant to smell, swarms of frogs cover the swampy fields after its rising, tormenting gnats and flies breed in its slime, locusts fill the valley, and the sand blown from the desert blots out the sunshine as with dark clouds. Such disasters, if happening together about the time of the Exodus, would not fail to be regarded then and long after as the judgments of the god of Israel on the tyrant who would not set the oppressed people free.

A like explanation applies to the passage of the "Red" Sea.¹ Long ages back this was joined to the Mediterranean, but the channel then connecting them has been slowly silted up with sand, and at the date of our story was a place of swamps and inland lakes larger in their extent than at this day. Over these the harassed and hunted Israelites passed in safety, while the Egyptians, delayed by their cumbrous chariots, were caught in the darkness by the advancing tide or by a sudden inrush of waters, and perished; and at daybreak "Israel saw them dead upon the seashore." This defeat, to Moses and the freed people the crowning proof of the protection of the god whom he served, called forth this noble song of victory:—

¹ Exod. iii. 10.

² Act. vii. 30.

³ See Appendix, note B.

¹ On the obscurity of the origin of this name see *Encyclop. Biblica*, s.v.

"I will sing of Jehovah, for he is glorious :
 The horses and chariots he whelms in the sea ;
 Jehovah, the God of my father, will I praise.
 Jehovah is a man of war :
 Thy right hand, O Jehovah, shatters the
 enemy.
 The chariots of Pharaoh and his might he
 threw into the sea ;
 His chosen chariooteers were drowned in the
 Red Sea.
 The floods covered them ;
 They sank to the bottom as a stone.
 At the breath of thy nostrils the waters rose
 in a heap ;
 The floods stood like a bank ; the floods ran
 in the midst of the sea.
 The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake ;
 I will divide the spoil ; I will satisfy my lust
 upon them ;
 I will draw my sword and destroy them with
 my hand.
 Thou didst blow with thy mouth, O Jehovah ;
 The floods covered them ;
 They sank like lead in the mighty waters.
 Who among the gods is like unto thee,
 Jehovah?"

According to the story in the book of Exodus, above two million persons must have left Egypt. This is a great overstatement of a kind not infrequent in the Old Testament, because Eastern writers used numbers in no very exact way—often with a notion of their sacredness, and sometimes to give the idea of completeness. This will explain why the same numbers occur over and over again, as 3, 4, 7, 10, and their multiples; seven being most sacred, as based on the moon's phases. An amusing proof of the veneration once paid to this number occurs in the reply made by a Jesuit named Sizzi to Galileo, when the latter announced his discovery of the moons of the planet Jupiter. Sizzi told him that he must be mistaken, because the Jews and other nations had divided the week into seven days, after the seven planets, and that, if the number of planets was increased, the division of time into weeks would have to be given up!

The "sons of Israel" and the "mixed multitude" that went forth with them took a southward path, their aim being

to avoid any route which might bring them near the grip of Egypt, whose strong hand had long held Syria and lands beyond under tribute. This track brought them to the valleys and plains around Sinai, a range of granite rocks bare of any green thing, and broken into peaks and waterless ravines, but with green pasture lands about its base. The mountain, which probably takes its name from the moon-god Sin, was a sacred "high place" to the Semites ; and to Jew and Christian hallowed memories gather round it still as the place where, in common belief, Yahwè came down in fire,¹ calling Moses to its top, where he stayed "forty" days and "forty" nights, receiving laws written on two stone tablets by the god's finger.

We find like legends of laws given from heaven direct to man among the Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, and other nations ; and in the days when men were rough and untamed, with passions unchecked by regard for others' needs, it was well that such notions concerning the origin of laws prevailed. For had men looked on the rules which curbed their fierceness as merely the work of fellow-men, they might have overturned them, whereas they feared to disobey commands which they believed the gods had given, and which seemed, like religion, heaven-born. As society, however, advanced, such notions became hurtful, because they hindered the ridance or alteration of laws which had become unsuited to a better state of things. As an example of this, so long as men believed that every word in the Bible was inspired by God, they quoted texts from it in defence of many evil things, as, for example, (1) of slavery, "Cursed is Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be";² (2) of witchcraft, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live";³ (3) of war in its most cruel form, "Thou shalt consume all the people wh
 Jehovah shall deliver thee ; thine

¹ Exod. xix. 18. ² Gen. ix. 25.

³ Exod. xxii. 18 ; Deut. xviii. 10.

shall have no pity upon them";¹ and (4) of the divine right of kings, "For who can stretch forth his hands against Jehovah's anointed?"² while we all know how its verses have been vainly cited in disproof of one fact after another which science has revealed. Happily for man's progress and release from false fears, we have since come to see that laws rest on quite other ground, which does not make them the less, but the more, binding. They were not given by gods in human form and with human voice to men of old, but framed by man for man, and are the slow outgrowth of many ages, being at the outset shaped and carried out in rough fashion as a defence against brute force, and afterwards tempered with mercy born of human needs and man's sense of duty to his fellows.

It is worth our while to turn aside from the work of Moses for a moment, and inquire how the laws on which man's conduct is based arose, for we may learn thereby what is the ground, and what should be the motive, for our acts—truly a serious thing.

Man, at his lowest, has a sense of right to anything which he has been the first to secure; and, if another wrests his gains from him, he feels that he has been wronged; while, contrariwise, if he were the spoiler, he would know that like feelings were aroused in his victim. Only by allowing other men to hold in peace what they had gained could he expect to retain his. Self-interest, in which were the germs of *duty*, prompted this. When he joins himself with others to form a tribe, this feeling is extended to them, and it becomes the duty of one towards another to guard property held in common, as land, cattle, etc. Laws are framed for the general weal; whatever sustains the tribe in its struggles against other tribes is approved, whatever weakens it is condemned, out of which grows the sense of rightness and wrongness. Thus arises a "tone," or

"public feeling," as we call it; love of self and of one's family extending itself to care for the welfare of the tribe; then, as men grow from tribes into nations, to the nation as a whole, making them brave and eager to defend it, and branding as cowards those who would evade that duty. And as the sense of one's own rights led to respect for others' rights, out of which duty was born, so the sense of one's own need and dependence creates feelings for others' needs, and awakens those feelings of pity which are expressed in kindly deeds, till man crowns his life by acts of self-sacrifice which have enriched the world and subdued its brute forces. So great are the changes which arise in the slow growth of men into nations, that laws are ever altering, so much so that oftentimes that which one age acts upon as right a later time rejects as wrong. Laws, therefore, can never be fixed, nor can they be perfect, because, if man should ever reach a stage when he does right because he cannot do otherwise, he will cease to need them. Towards this, though the goal is yet remote, he is nearer to-day than of old; and this through slowly learning to rule thoughts, words, and deeds in accord with the demands which the whole world, not merely his little corner of it, makes upon him; and one day, should the tribal feeling expand into an all-including human feeling, he will be at one with all around him, and "shall not vex or destroy."

Thus the *ground* of duty rests on no ancient code, but solely on the experience of what, after long ages of sore testing, man has come to feel to be best for man. "This commandment which I command thee this day is not hidden, neither is it far off; it is not in heaven that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us that we may hear it and do it? neither is it beyond the sea that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? but the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy

¹ Deut. vii. 16.

² 1 Sam. xxvi. 9.

heart, that thou mayest do it"; while the *motive* which should suffice to impel us to right-doing should not be hope of reward or fear of punishment, but obedience to the voice, which, in telling us what we "ought" to do, tells us, as that word once meant, what we "owe" to do, since not doing this is to make discord in the order towards which all things tend; it is to be as a jarring note in the "music of the spheres."

The earliest form in which the Ten Words were given is lost, while the two versions which are found in the Pentateuch (Exodus xx. 2-17, Deuteronomy v. 6-21) differ; but the substance of each is as follows:—

I. Yahwè, am thy God.

Thou shalt have none other gods before my face, nor make any image of a god.

Thou shalt take no false oaths.

Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day.

Honour thy father and thy mother.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness.

Thou shalt not covet.

So plain and direct a code was of the kind adapted to curb the lawlessness of desert tribes; and, in connecting it with the worship of Jehovah, Moses secured for it an authority that no command of a mere fellow-man might possess. Even this did not prevent the people from reverting to the old cult of animal-worship, when, in their distress at the long absence of their leader on the holy mount, they melted the earrings of the women, and fashioned therewith a golden calf, under which form the god was worshipped.

At the core of the legend of the delivery of the Ten Words by Jehovah himself to Moses, amid the terrors of the thunders of Sinai,² there may lie some trustworthy tradition of the legislation wrought by that hero-leader. He is spoken of as retaining or reviving sundry old rites and customs, as the dedication of the firstborn, perchance expressed in milder form by the rite of circumcision

common to so many races; laws dealing with family life; the rights of masters and slaves; the settlement of quarrels and revenge of wrong. This last has ever been a sacred duty among barbarous peoples; the Arabs and other nomads still make the vendetta, or "thar," as they call it, binding on the nearest friend of a slain man as the "avenger," and, indeed, in such rough code is the germ of laws framed by nations for self-defence. "Life for life, eye for eye," ran the oldest forms; afterwards redress in goods or money, as among our forefathers, with whom each tooth and finger-nail had its fixed price.

Among the sacred objects of the Hebrews we find a jealously-guarded "ark," or chest, to which magical powers were credited, and which may have held symbols of Yahwè. It was placed under the care of Aaron, brother of Moses, and of other priests, and kept in a tent or "tabernacle," before which the chiefs met for counsel and sacrifice. Arks not only figured in the Egyptian religion in "processions of the shrines," but were in use among the Akkadians, and were copied by the Babylonians and Phœnicians. They most probably contained, as Dr. Robertson Smith suggests, "some portable symbols of the deity." Renan, without sufficient warrant, derives the Israelite ark from Egypt, for it is doubtful if any of the rites and ceremonies of the Egyptian religion were adopted by the Hebrews. Certainly they did not adopt its teachings about a future life. They had the confused notions common to all semi-savage races, arising from dreams, shadows, and such-like unreal things, of a second self, which at death went to the under-world, or "hades," a land of darkness and forgetfulness, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest"; where lie "the small and great, and the slave is free from his master";³ where the tired shade, like Samuel's in the legend, when the wizard's art summon-

Deut. xxx. 11-14. * See *infra*, p. 24.

² Job iii. 17-19.

it to earth, asks, "Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?"¹ Such was "sheol," wrongly translated "hell" in English Bibles; and for hundreds of years the Israelites had no other belief than this vague one in a life after death. Their lawgivers and prophets—Moses, David, Isaiah, and others—made no appeal to men's fears or hopes by the doctrine of a heaven or a hell; the only reward for which the Israelite cared was to live long in the land which Jehovah had given him; to die young, "cut off from his people," was his direst dread; he whitewashed his tombs, and shrank from touching a corpse; in his legends of a happy past the patriarchs are represented as living hundreds of years on the earth,² as in the prophet's vision of a brighter future "the child shall die an hundred years old."³

When we attempt to dissect the various parts of the code given in the Pentateuch into pre-Mosaic, Mosaic, and post-Mosaic, we find that the subject bristles with difficulties. The only test that can be applied with hope of success is to see to what stages of society the several codes are applicable. The Pentateuch has undergone many revisions at the hands of writers of different periods, and the laws which it contains are of different dates. Those which make up the larger portion of the second, third, and fourth books are post-Mosaic. They were framed when the Israelites had become a nation, with a fixed centre of government and worship. Moses could not foresee what laws would be needed in future times, and, even if he could, the laying down of rules about keeping festivals of seedtime and harvest, about cities of refuge, cities of the Levites, and other features of a settled state, would have been meaningless to semi-barbarous nomads.

It must be borne in mind that Hebrew codes and customs, like Hebrew beliefs, no longer stand alone. The day is

for ever gone when they are to be interpreted without reference to corresponding creeds, ritual, and ceremonies of other cults, since many things which were once thought to be special to one are found to be common to all. And this comparative method, as it is called, is the more needful because the sources of our knowledge of Hebrew institutions are literary, and confined, in the main, to the Old Testament, a collection of writings of uncertain age and authorship, and of unsettled or disputed meaning; whereas Egypt and Chaldaea are for ever yielding materials from their monuments and inscriptions which are not the less interpretative all round because they compel frequent revision of our conclusions.

As has been seen, for knowledge of the origin of the Sabbath we have to revise the account in Genesis by the light of Akkadian records; and when, led by preconceptions, we speak of a moral element in the Mosaic code which marks it as higher than any other of its time, we are confronted with evidence that the Egyptians and Babylonians possessed ethical codes which—notably in the case of the last-named—may have influenced the Hebrew.

When the Babylonian origin of the Creation, Deluge, and other legends was proven, it was thought that these had been borrowed by the Jews during the Exile. But the discovery of cuneiform tablets at Tel-el-Amarna in 1887 showed that about 1400 B.C. the Egyptian rulers of Canaan wrote to their superiors in the Babylonian language. This makes it exceedingly probable that the Chaldean legends were known in Canaan at that time, and that they thus became part of the stock of the myths and legends of the conquering Hebrews. For the like reason—unless, as is probable, there was a primitive stock of Semitic law and custom—the Hebrews may have become familiar with the lofty moral code of the Babylonian monarch Hammurabi, or Hammurabi, who reigned about 2200 B.C.—i.e., a thousand years

¹ Sam. xxviii. 15.

² Gen. v.

³ Isa. lxv. 20.

before the age of Moses. Justice and equity, consideration for woman, the law of revenge tempered with the law of ransom, the sanctity of the oath—these, and much more, find a place in

the decrees of a prince who, with good title, says of himself: "I was a master who was unto my people as the father who had begotten them."¹

III.—THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

WHEN the tribes struck their tents in Sinai, they turned northwards, and, after some years of wandering and warring, had so far gained the mastery over other desert nomads as to secure a firm footing on the rich uplands east of the river Jordan. From these they could see Canaan, a land of hills and dales, of tilled plains, fertile valleys, walled cities, and other signs of settled life. The goodly sight raised their greed, and, made hardy by their bracing wilderness life, the bravest of them resolved to invade the land and win for themselves a settled home among vineyards which they had not dressed, and trees which they had not planted. But the task proved neither short nor easy; for the Canaanites, who were also of Semitic race, were well armed, inured to war by many struggles, and, moreover, defending their homes. Their weakness lay in the hilly nature of the country, which divided them into thirty or forty petty "kingdoms," and which for long years was a barrier to the union of the Israelites.

Canaan, or the "lowlands," since known by other names, as the Land of Israel, Palestine, Holy Land, is a

narrow strip of country, hemmed in between the Mediterranean Sea and the river Jordan. From the mountains of Lebanon, which form its northern boundary, a range of lofty limestone hills, pierced with caverns and broken by many valleys, runs the whole length of the land as far as the desert of Sinai. On their western side these hills incline gently to fertile plains and a sandy coast, and on their eastern side descend more sharply to the deep and winding valley of the Jordan. The country is dotted in some places with the sites of old volcanoes, and in other parts is strewn with loose rocks, witnessing to the play of forces of terrible might, which ages back cracked and crumpled the crust, heaved the mountains and rent open the crooked valley, one of the most wonderful clefts in the world, down which dashes the Jordan, called, from its rapid fall, the "descender."

In the north the hills and dales are verdant and fruitful, and the landscape richly varied; but the bold outlines slope into barren ridges and stony valleys as the south is approached, until in the wilderness country around the

¹ The stone pillar on which this remarkable code is inscribed was found at Sussi in December 1901. It has "a plaque in bas-relief, which represents the King standing before the seated divinity, from whose shoulders flames of fire proceed to form wings, and who is dictating to the King the laws." This god is "probably the old Bel or Enlil, the god Sadau of the 'great mountain,' or El Shaddai, who figures prominently in the text as the god who inspired the King. The old Bel was the god who dwelt on the mountain of the world and gave laws to men, and wore on his breast the tablets of destiny. So here we have a proof of the existence of the tradition of the mountain-given law long before the Mosaic record on Sinai" (Times, April 13th, 1903). For a full translation of, and notes on, the inscription see *The Hammurabi Code and the Sinaitic Legislation*, by Chilperic Edwards (Watts; 1904).

Dead Sea the scenery is dreary and the region bare of any green thing. This very remarkable lake, into which the Jordan tamely creeps to its grave, "tarrying," as an old writer says,¹ "as if loth to approach the hateful sea that swallows it up and spoils its precious waters by union with its ownrecking waves," fills a wide part of the valley some 1,300 feet below the level of the Mediterranean, and is walled-in on both sides by stern mountains, pillar-shaped masses of salt being scattered about its shores. Its clear but bitter waters, in which only very low forms of life are found, contain one-fourth solid matter, whereas common sea-water contains but twentyfifth, and, as they have no outlet, are drawn off by the sun's rays, causing a dim mist to hang over the lake and adding to its weird appearance.

A great deal of nonsense has been written about this Dead Sea, or Sea of Salt, as the Arabs call it. It was said that dark clouds always floated over it, that no winds ever ruffled it, that no birds flew across it, that no creature could live in it, and that the whole land round bore witness to the curse of God. Such foolish talk arose from the belief in an old legend that certain "cities of the plain"—Sodom, Gomorrah, and other places—had been destroyed by fire from heaven, and that the Dead Sea covered their site. One of the salt mountains, which was shaped somewhat like a woman, was said to have been the wife, who was thus punished for giving a longing look upon Sodom as she was escaping from it! Myths of this class are found the world over; in Africa and India certain queer-shaped standing stones are said to have been giants; the long rows of stones at Karnak were petrified soldiers; one of the stone circles in England to have been a party of girls who had danced on a Sunday; and in the tale of "Zobeide" in the

Arabian Nights we read of a city in which all the infidel people were turned into stone!

Such legends, indeed all legends whatsoever and wheresoever, are the outcome of man's ignorance concerning the universe. Among the lower races the earth is believed to be the centre of all things, and each department of nature ruled over by a deity. Every untoward event that happens is regarded as the work of such beings, and this easy explanation suffices until man learns how unvarying is the order of nature, and what sure effects follow certain causes. Therefore, as knowledge advances, the number of events which are looked upon as miracles, or as the capricious acts of superhuman beings, lessens; but while earthquakes, eclipses, and comets are no longer thus explained by educated persons, the notion still lingers that hurricanes, famines, and pestilences on man and beast are sent by the Almighty to warn or punish mankind.

Only as the wholesome lessons of science teach us that nothing happens by chance or caprice, and that "if law be anywhere it is everywhere," do such harmful notions of a lawless world ruled by a fickle God depart and give place to trust based upon eternal order, and to love that casts out fear.

Like Greece and other small countries of renown, the place which Canaan fills in history is not due to its size, for it is under two hundred miles in length, and nowhere more than fifty miles in breadth, but largely to its position between the great rival empires of the past. Not only must their armies cross it as they strove to reach the Nile or the Euphrates, but its coast roads were great highways of trade between east and west, creating intercourse between divers races. Its history is one of ceaseless turmoil from the time when Semitic tribes fought with nameless savages of the Stone Age to our own day; but more than all the fame given it as the arena of struggles between mighty empires is the renown bestowed upon it by that remarkable

¹ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, vi. 5, 2.

² Gen. xix. 24-29

people with whose history we are now concerned—Israel, “the lifter-up of the banner of righteousness, as Greece was the lifter-up to the nations of the banner of art and science.”¹

It was under the command of Joshua, who had become leader on the death of Moses, that some of the tribes crossed the Jordan. Their bravery was rewarded by the fall of Jericho, a walled town, and by the defeat of many Canaanites in their mountain strongholds; but as the invaders fought only on foot, they had small success in the plains. “Jehovah,” naively says the old chronicler, “was with Judah, and he took the mountain and possessed it, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the low ground, because they had chariots of iron.”² So varying were the fortunes of the Israelites that, while in some parts they maintained the upper hand, in others they were glad to come to terms with the Canaanites, even paying them tribute; and more than two hundred years passed before all the land was theirs. For wars in that day and long after sometimes dragged on for centuries, even years being spent in besieging a single city. In the history of our island the Saxons were thirty years winning a corner of it, and two hundred years elapsed before they had driven the Britons across sea and forest to the fastnesses of Wales.

One great drawback to the more rapid success of the Israelites was their disunion, which increased on the death of Joshua. No able leader arose to fill his place; a wild and lawless time set in; each man did what was right in his own eyes; the tribes quarrelled one with another and stood in great danger of losing what was already won. For on the east of the Jordan border clans harassed and plundered them; along the coast the powerful Philistines (an alien people of uncertain origin, and of whose name “Palestine” is said to be a corruption), cramped for space, were pushing

their way inland, while remnants of the Canaanites were ever on the watch to regain lost ground. Besides suffering from foes without and disputes within, the Israelites were further weakened by falling into the worship of the Canaanitish gods, whose names and features had much in common with their own. The chief shrine of Jehovah had been fixed at Shiloh, and thither the tribes gathered in yearly festival; but elsewhere he was worshipped side by side with Baal and other nature-gods, in whose honour impure and bloody rites were practised. But great as was the peril of all that was special to Israel being effaced by contact with other peoples, the tribes had forever turned their backs upon a wandering life, and their growth into a nation was only a question of time. Whence sudden danger threatened them, brave leaders failed them not, women as well as men, upon whom “the spirit of Jehovah had come,” and who united the tribes and sustained what faith and hope of unity was left. The stories of these “judges,” as they are called, of their valour, not unmixed with the cruelty of their age and race, form the heroic chapter in Israel’s confused history. With the famous song of Deborah,³ which chants their deeds, and with the story of Gideon’s craft and victory, there mingles the legend of “Samson,”⁴ telling how he killed a thousand Philistines with an ass’s jawbone,⁵ carried away the huge gates of a city; pulled down a temple, crushing thousands of his foes in the ruins; and in a later fable, crumbled two mountains to powder by rubbing them together!

But, despite all the efforts of the “judges,” the Philistines became masters of the land west of the Jordan, reducing the Israelites so completely as to strip them of their weapons and compel them to come to their conquerors when they wanted their ploughshares and bill

¹ Judges v.

² Simón, a solar hero; see Goldziher, *Myth.*, App. ii., and *Encyclop. Biblica*, v.

³ Judges xv. 15.

⁴ *Literature and Dogma*, p. 355.

⁵ Judges i. 19.

sharpened. To fill their cup of misery, the ark itself, which had been carried into battle to ensure success, fell into the hands of the foes;¹ although, so runs the legend,² it brought such troubles upon its captors that they were glad to be quit of it, and, putting it on a waggon drawn by cows, left the animals free to drag it whither they would, whereby the Israelites recovered it. About this time there arose the greatest man in Israel since Moses had died—Samuel, priest, azirite, and seer. From his boyhood he had served at the shrine in Shiloh; a nazirite, or “one set apart,” he drank no wine, thus opposing the drunkenasts in honour of Baal; while as a judge he won the highest respect by the justice of his decrees. But it is as a seer that he is chiefly renowned. Under various names, as soothsayers, sorcerers, shamans, medicine-men, such a class is found among all barbarous people, and, concealed under more or less polish of high-sounding names, among civilised people also. It has its rise in the worldwide notion that the Deity makes known his will to men by sign or “oracle,” even through “seers,” or through certain omens, the meaning of which only the wise can interpret; this being divined, among other ways, by the flight or cry of birds, the entrails of animals, the breaking of rods, the casting of lots. Among the Israelites the will of Jehovah was often looked for in dreams and visions, and we find all classes employing priests and soothsayers to cast lots, the “Urim and Thummim,” before the sacred ark or images, and also calling the aid of seers, who were believed to “see” into what was hidden, and to tell things to come.

The Hebrew words for this class are “le’ah” and “chōzeh,” both meaning “he who sees.” At a later time the word “nabi,” meaning to “bubble forth,” as of a fountain, was applied to men. In the days of Samuel were noted the excitement, akin to frenzy, into

which they worked themselves, often with the aid of music and dancing, after the manner of such all the world over to this day, both in savage and civilised countries. History abounds with examples of the harmful waste to which feeling runs unless wisely directed; and the great and serious work done by Samuel, who, himself once a soothsayer, had made a knowledge of the will of Jehovah his study, was to gather these seers into companies known as “schools of the prophets,” and control them so that they “were changed into other men.” They praised Jehovah, whose “word” they poured forth, with harp and lute; they devoted themselves to study of the past and of such traditions of the laws and teaching of Moses as had been preserved, kindling thereby an intense faith in Israel’s distinct place and mission, and in unwavering service of Jehovah as the only hope of progress. Such men, by their teaching and their promotion of gentler manners in that rude time, were the humble forerunners of that “goodly fellowship of the prophets” so bold to reprove sin, so quick to comfort, so strong to endure, and so keen-eyed to see into the meaning of events.

Samuel, who was no warrior, felt that the only cure for the ills of his people was in putting away Baal, Ashtaroth, and other gods, as well as the teraphim or household gods which were worshipped in the home, and in serving Jehovah, who had brought them out of Egypt, given the law through Moses; the god whose was the land in which they dwelt, and who alone was Israel’s king. But there was a second party which, with the same aim in view as Samuel and his followers—the union of the tribes—saw no hope of reaching it save by copying the nations around, and having a king who could lead them to battle and impose his strong will upon their wilfulness. Feeling ran high on both sides, and it is pleasant to turn from the angrier features of the struggle to read this old fable in ridicule

¹ Sam. iv. 11.

² 1 Sam. v. vi.

¹ Sam. x. 5, 6.

of the kingly office which is given in the book of Judges.¹

Once upon a time the trees went forth to choose a king ; and they said to the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive answered, Shall I leave the oil for which gods and men honour me, and wave my branches over the trees ? Then they went to the fig tree, but he said, Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit that I may wave my branches over the trees ? Then they asked the vine, but he would not leave his wine which cheereth the gods and men. At last the trees turned to the bramble, and he, being fit for nought else, accepted the crown !

The knotty question of kingship was cut by the sword. There had uprisen among the brave ones a man of noble presence, named Saul, whose valour in delivering a city had turned all eyes upon him as a born ruler of men. The high place to which he had earned a title, not by birth or fraud, but by gallant deed, was accorded him, and he became King of Israel. He delivered his people from the Philistines, and laid the foundation of Israel's short-lived greatness as a kingdom. His zeal for Jehovah had secured him Samuel's support ; but while the seer desired to have unity under one religion, stamping out Baal-worship, the king sought, by permitting freedom in these matters, to win all under one rule, and so they quarrelled, Saul at last persecuting the priests and back-sliding into belief in wizards. His power dwindled, the Philistines regained strength to attack him, and, after seeing three of his sons fall in battle against them, he put an end to his troubled life. But the simple, manly way in which he had worn his honours, and the memory of his bravery, endeared him to his people, and the grief which his death called forth is shown in this ancient song,² which tradition ascribed to David³ :—

¹ Ch. ix. 8-15. ² 2 Sam. i. 17-27.

³ It was known among the archers of Judah, to whom David taught it, as the "song of the

" O Israel, the beauty of the forest lies slain on thy hills !

How are the mighty fallen ?

Tell it not in Gath,

Publish it not in the streets of Askalon,

Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice ;

Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised dance for joy.

O mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew upon you,

Ye fields and hills of death !

For there was the warrior's shield cast away ;
The shield of Saul, bespattered, all un-
anointed with oil.

For the blood of the slain, from the fat of the
warriors,

The bow of Jonathan turned not back ;
The sword of Saul returned not empty.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant
in their lives,

And in their death they were not divided.
They were swifter than eagles, they were

stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep for Saul,
Who clothed you in purple and splendour,
And threw jewels of gold round your necks.

I am grieved by thy loss, Jonathan, my
brother ;

Thou wast very dear to me :

More precious to me was thy love than the
love of women.

How are the mighty fallen,

And the weapons of war perished."

The rapid rise of men of humble station to high place in the state is not rare in the East, and David, the next great ruler of Israel, was of mean rank. His valour, or, according to another account, his skill upon the harp, had brought him under Saul's notice and favour, who gave him a daughter in marriage. But later on, thinking that he had an eye to the throne itself, Saul sought to kill him, whereupon David fled, and was at last forced to take refuge among the Philistines. On the death of Saul one of his sons became king ; but the renown of David and his zeal for Jehovah was such that the tribe of Judah voted for him, the priests and seers supported him, and, on the murder of Ishboseth, he became ruler over all Israel.

bow." The words, "beauty of the forest," in the first line refer to Saul's son Jonathan, David's dear friend, and mean "Gazelle"—a name by which the slain man was known among his comrades.

reign was warlike and brilliant, and, with the aid of able commanders, he extended his kingdom as far as the Euphrates. One of the greatest triumphs of his arms was the capture of Jerusalem, then called Jebus, the stronghold of the Jebusites. This city, which was to acquire such immortal renown, stands amid barren scenery, "the saddest in the world,"¹ on a rocky ridge broken into deep valleys, which rendered its conquest no easy task; indeed, it was the boast of the people that the blind and the lame sufficed to defend it.² David chose it as his capital; and, aided by workmen from Phoenicia, with whose king he was on friendly terms, built a palace there. But he did a far more important and prudent thing withal, securing thereby the support of the priests, in making the city the chief seat of worship of Jehovah. Thither he brought the ark, "whose name is Jehovah,"³ in solemn procession, headed by himself as king-priest, clad, like the Egyptian priests, in white linen robe, and dancing like the "nabim" to his harp, while, as the choir approached the gates, they sang:—

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Be ye lift up, ye doors of old,
That the King of Glory may come in!"

the warders asking:—

"Who, then, is the King of Glory?"

and the priests replying:—

"It is Jehovah, strong and mighty;
Jehovah, the mighty in battle."

Thus Jerusalem became the "city of David," the dwelling-place of Jehovah; and round the tabernacle on Mount Zion the priesthood gathered, causing the many shrines that had been raised to that god all over the land to fall one by one into neglect and disuse.

The career of David had been an

eventful one. As a youth, the task of guarding his father's sheep in the wilderness from robbers and wild beasts had inspired him to hardship, and called into play his courage. He had cheered the loneliness of his shepherd life with music and song, for which he had great natural gifts, and fed his soul with thoughts about the god whose voice he heard in the thunder and the shaking trees, and whose glory shone around him by night as well as by day. Called in the fitful fortunes of that rough age to serve near his king, he at last became king himself, although his path to the throne had lain through craft and murder. Even after making allowance for the times in which he lived, he was cruel and treacherous, slaughtering conquered foes with horrible torture, and, when dying, ordering the murder of a man whom he had vowed to spare. Yet he could be a generous foe, and was a faithful friend; according to his light, a devout man, seeking to know and striving to do the will of his god. His later years were saddened by discontent and rebellion; but, as he summed up the events of his varied and romantic life, he believed that Jehovah had guided him all through, and thus he praised him in song:—

"Jehovah, my rock, my fortress, my shield.
With praise I called upon him,
And was delivered from my enemies.
He heard my voice out of his palace,
My cry came into his ears.
Then the earth quaked and trembled,
The foundations of the earth trembled, for he
was wroth.
There went up a smoke from his nostrils,
A consuming fire went from his mouth,
A blast of burning coals.
He bowed the heavens and did ride upon the
cherubim,
He rode on the wings of the wind.
He made darkness his veil,
The tempest and dark clouds his tabernacle.
Jehovah thundered in the heavens,
The Highest gave forth his voice—hailstones
and coals of fire—
He sent forth his arrows and scattered the
enemy,
The lightning fell and discomfited them.
Jehovah girded me with power;
He made my feet like harts' feet,
He taught my hand to war,

¹ "Le plus triste pays du monde."—*Vie de Jésus*, p. 25.

² 2 Sam. v. 6.

³ 2 Sam. vi. 2.

So that my arm bent even a bow of iron.
 I followed my enemies and overtook them;
 I turned not back till they were destroyed;
 I scattered them like dust before the wind,
 I cast them out like dung into the streets.
 Thou, Jehovah, savest me from the strivings
 of the nations,
 And makest me their head;
 People whom I knew not serve me.
 At the hearing of the ear they obey me;
 The sons of strangers do me homage;
 They come trembling from their strongholds.
 Long live Jehovah! blessed be my rock,
 And praised be the God of my salvation.”

Long after David's time, when the glory of the kingdom had parted, the Jews looked back with fond regret to his reign as the Golden Age of their country's history, and the traditions of his gift of song caused them to ascribe very many of the psalms to his pen.

He may be fairly called the father of Hebrew psalmody, but the larger number of compositions which comprise the “Book of Psalms” are far too sublime and varied to have been the work of one man in that day, still less of a rough soldier such as he, the burden of whose songs was of war and valiant deeds. Neither could they have been the work of one age, for the phases of life with which they deal are far too changeful to have been passed through in a few years. Indeed, we know that the collection stretches from the reign of David to the time of the Maccabees—that is, between 800 and 900 years; but only in a few cases do the contents of a psalm enable us to fix its date, and, even after stripping away the misleading titles which were added in a later age, any attempt at arrangement in order of time is hopeless. They have been fitly called “the hymn-book of the second temple,” for onwards from the writing of the noble psalm, probably the 68th, sung at the dedication of that building, was the period when Hebrew poetry reached its fullest perfection.

We may take it that most of the psalms which praise the works of Jehovah, which chant his might as a “man of war,” and

which breathe a fierce and revengeful spirit, are among the earliest; that the later are those rich and mellowed songs whose theme is the joy of the people in the temple and the law, and latest of all the plaintive cries wrung from them when exiled from fatherland or suffering grievous persecution at the hands of the tyrant. Much of their vividness and depth of feeling is lost in translating them from the Hebrew, and their beauty is further obscured through their being printed as prose writings in our Bibles instead of as poems cast in lyric form. For this latter reason it is better, after acquaintance with their general history, to read them in a “paragraph” version, or in a book like the *Golden Treasury Psalter*, where they are set down with some regard both to order and to “rhythm,” or measure.

Instead of quoting from songs whose strains have been repeated by the uplifted and cast-down through many ages since, and which will always rank among the world's noblest poems, we will cite one ascribed to David which is not found in the Psalter.¹ Its subject is his slaying of a giant named Goliath:—

16, 866

PSALM CLI.

“I was small among my brethren, and, growing up in my father's house, I kept my father's sheep.

“My hands made the organ, and my fingers shaped the psaltery. And who declared unto my Lord? He, the Lord, he heard all things. He sent his angel, and he took me from my father's sheep: he anointed me in mercy with his unction.

“Great and goodly are my brethren, but with them the Lord was not well pleased.

“I went to meet the stranger, and he curs'd by all his idols.

“But I smote off his head with his own drawn sword, and I blotted out the reproach of Israel.”

We have reached a point when something should be said about the sources of our knowledge concerning the early history of the Israelites, for, altho

¹ It is given in some psalters of the Septuagint; here it is quoted from Baring Gould's *Testament Legends*, ii. 175.

they were doubtless acquainted with the art of writing while in contact with Egypt, they were in too great a state of turmoil from that time until their settlement as a nation under kingly rule to permit of much thought being given to the shaping of such records of the past as had been preserved among the several tribes.

And here, for the clearance of the matter, it may be well to say a little about the growth of history, taking an old Greek myth for our text.

It says that the goddess of Memory had nine daughters, called the Muses, who were the inspirers and patrons of music, song, and all learning among men, and the temple sacred to whom gave its name to the famous "Museum" at Alexandria, and to like buildings since in which treasures of science and art are gathered. Of these nine sister-goddesses Clio, the eldest, was the Muse of history and epic poetry, which latter treats of real or fabled events. Now, this myth holds a great truth, for memory is the mother of history, since all history has its birth in the stored-up recollections of men about things which they have heard or seen or done, and the earliest form which it takes is song. The song itself is both old and young—old as having its birth long before the art of writing was invented, and young as being the outcome of ages too vast to be reckoned by years, throughout which man, although he knew it not, was making history. Far back as we can trace his presence we find the tools with which he worked and the weapons with which he fought, and these tell us how wild and savage was his earliest state; but it was not till he began to think, *to know that he was*, that memory grew strong to do its silent work of hoarding up what eye and ear brought to it, and at last to give forth of its store in song and "saga" (or thing *said*), as the Norsemen called it. And the earliest of them, like that fine song of

triumph on the shores of the Red Sea, or Lamech's remarkable little poem in Genesis iv. 23, 24, told of war and valiant deeds, sounding the praises of those who wrought them, for such a story of fighting has this world's history ever been. With these were preserved legends of the kind named in the beginning of this book, and thus piecemeal grew the traditions (Lat. *traditio*, "handed down") passed on from one to another by word of mouth, told round the camp fires, and chanted by the minstrels, until they were fixed in writing. While in floating form they were coloured and altered by the art and fancy of the story-teller, and yielded to the impress of the scenes amid which they had arisen; but they never lacked the wonderful, for both they who narrated and they who listened had no facts wherewith to check the wild and unlikely tales, nor did doubts ever cross their minds about them. Nature had not yet become the scene of order that fails not; earth, sea, and sky were one vast wonderland, and every nook and cranny the home of myth, haunted by the goblins and fairies with whom man in his ignorance peopled them. Moreover, as the tradition became older, so old that none could tell whence or how it came, it was revered as the gift of heaven; they of whose deeds it spake loomed large and grand, and were in course of time deified. And thus the words themselves became sacred words; their care fell to a special class, who committed them to memory and had honour paid them as keepers of the treasured history. Wonderful as it may seem to us who have so many books to aid our memories, and who have to crowd those memories with so much about so many things, the entire traditions of tribes, the ballads and stories which make up long epics like the Iliad, the Volsungs, and other famous poems, were preserved, word for word, during hundreds of years, by the memory of man. In proof of this, the great epic of the Finns called the *Kalevala*, which contains some twenty

¹ See the author's *Childhood of the World and Story of Primitive Man*.

thousand lines, was within the latter half of the nineteenth century taken down from the mouths of peasants, fishermen, old women and young folks, by a learned man, who with untiring zeal wandered, year after year, from cabin to cabin, through the length and breadth of Finland, and whose labours had great reward. For, when he came to piece together the fragments he had thus gathered, they formed one noble whole, which scholars pore over with keenest interest and to which children listen with delight. Again, there are Brahmins who make it the sole business of their lives to commit to memory the sacred hymns of the Veda, and this they do with such care that Professor Max Müller says where any question arises as to the exact language of the verses he would rather trust the memories of these men than the written or printed copy.

Such then, in brief outline, is the mode in which knowledge of the past has come down; and as, owing to the very air in which they were born, the traditions are crowded with legend and miracle, the work of our time has been to seek for the facts within them, never forgetting that the legends themselves are of value as witnesses to the thoughts and beliefs of the people among whom they arose. When we reflect how hard it is to get at the truth about any event near at hand, because everyone will describe it in his own way, we shall the better understand how much more this applies to events which happened hundreds and thousands of years ago in other lands, for an account of which we have to trust to histories which have grown out of stories held in the memories of unlearned men, ready to believe whatever they were told. It should make us careful not to draw too hard-and-fast conclusions from records so uncertain; still more should it teach us the unwisdom of building systems of religion upon them, and of condemning those who seek a surer foundation. Now, it was once commonly believed, and the notion still prevails among the unlearned, that

whatever histories might have to be rewritten in the light of new knowledge, that of the Jews would not, because it was written by men guided by the spirit of God, and therefore kept free from error. But we now know that it grew as all recorded history has grown, centuries passing before its various books, after many alterations and additions, were gathered into one collection; that the writers of the earliest portions lived hundreds of years after the events which they narrate; and that they had to depend entirely on tradition. They knew nothing about the primitive state of their own and other races, neither had they any idea of the close relation of their several histories, or of the witness which these bear to the commingling of one people with another; while, instead of taking pains to get at the facts and let them speak for themselves, they warped them to support foregone conclusions. The chief among these were that Israel was Jehovah's chosen people, to which such events as the call of Abraham, the Exodus, and the conquest of Canaan witnessed, and that whatever trouble had fallen on the tribes was caused by their faithlessness to that god and to the law which he had given by Moses.

Based upon these events there had arisen before the time of David the idea of a "covenant,"¹ which Jehovah was said to have made with the Israelites through the patriarch Abraham, and by which they were to receive the blessing and guidance of that god in return for

¹ On the conquest of Canaan by the first kings of Israel a question arose as to the justice of the deed, and the conquerors' right to the land was then established by the fiction of a promise given to Israel's mythical ancestor (Genesis xv. 18; xxiv. 7). (Cf. art. "Covenant" in *Encyclopædia Biblica*.) We have a somewhat parallel instance in the audacious forgery known as the "Donation of Constantine," in which it was pretended that that Emperor had granted to Pope Sylvester and his successors sovereignty over Italy and the whole West. As Mr. Lecky says: "The immense number of forged documents is one of the most disgraceful features of the Church history of the first few centuries" (*Hist. of European Morals*, vol. i., p. 341; 1887 edit.).

obeying his commandments and keeping his law.

The priests, who were the earliest compilers of Jewish history, therefore made it their first care to collect from the scattered records, the traditions, and old customs, all that related to this law, adding thereto such accounts of the early history of the tribes as had been preserved among them. It was claimed for the ritual that it had formed part of the legislation of Moses, and this at least had the double effect of securing its acceptance by the people as binding upon them, and of upholding the importance of the priests, without whose aid one could observe the "covenant" right.

Politics and religion being combined in the Israelitish commonwealth, and things apart, as among other nations, records are not, like theirs, mere lists of events, but written to edify rather than to inform. Hebrew history in the Hebrew Bible—a fact to be kept before us for the right understanding of the Old Testament, in view of which we do not the less, rather the more, carefully sift and its statements.

Gain knowledge in itself and for itself is as profitless as the hoarding up of money: to be useful, it must be embedded; and when the facts about things reached, the next course is to find their relation to other facts and their being. Otherwise history fulfils no purpose than a novel to amuse us, is of use only as we are able through to trace the causes which brought in events to pass that have been or retarded man's progress in knowledge, goodness, and freedom. One result of placing the histories of side by side is to show how much, although unlike in detail, has in common, and how the mind of man has where worked in the same way, in page-making, myth-making, worship, as everywhere he has at starting shift with the same rude implements.

Seeing this, it is not possible to

look on the world's history, any more than on the world itself, with the eyes of our forefathers. To them it was the centre of all things, even sun, moon, and stars being lesser bodies, made to give it light. To us it is a tiny ball, member of one system among vaster systems; each bound to each as parts of a great whole, a *universe*, as it has been called in fulness of meaning to which science is ever adding. To them its history seemed centred in one race chosen alone of God, favoured beyond all others; to us no race stands by itself, but is also a part of a great whole, so interwoven with it that, whether it will or no, it cannot live to itself; Akkadian, Semite, Aryan, all intermingling and treading the same slow and slippery path, on the same mother earth, from the base to the noble. That is why, in this outline sketch of Jewish history, we may not pass in silence over the place of the Jews in the human family, and the influences which went before them and surrounded them, taking us, as these do, to Egypt and to the frontiers of the lands about the Euphrates, to gather from beneath mounds and tombs and from temple-walls the long-hidden story of the debt which Jew, Greek, and Roman, and through these, the world, owe to those ancient empires as teachers of science, art, law, and religion.

Now, what is true of the race is true of each member of it; for no human life can be rightly understood apart from knowledge of the age and country in which it was spent, and of the race whence it sprang. For this reason, before giving any sketch of Jesus, we are tracing the history of his people to the time when he lived—an account the more needful because, as will be seen, the records about him are scanty, conflicting, and uncertain.

To resume our story. David was succeeded by his favourite son Solomon, in whose reign the kingdom reached the height of its glory. While he did not neglect to make its borders and capital

secure, he formed friendships with neighbouring kings, and the peaceful state of the nation permitted the people to devote themselves to commerce and the arts. Trade was carried on with Egypt; ships, manned by Phœnicians, for the Israelites were no sailors, voyaged to Arabia and the mouths of the Indus, returning laden with the rich products and strange creatures which, with their Sanskrit names, are recorded in the book of Kings. After the custom of the East, Solomon had many wives, the chief among these being a daughter of the Pharaoh. For her he built a splendid palace in Jerusalem; but a more notable building than this was the small, yet magnificent, temple which, by means of the treasure left by his father, he erected to Jehovah on Mount Moriah. It was of stone, lined with the fragrant cedar-wood of Lebanon, and, since images of animals were forbidden by the second commandment, enriched with carvings of flowers, fruit, and various symbols of nature-worship, wrought by skilled workmen from Tyre, and doubtless borrowed from their religion. After the manner of Phœnician temples, it was divided into two parts, in one of which, the "holy," an altar and table for the showbread was placed. In the other, the "holy of holies," into which the high priest only could enter, the ark was kept, but hidden even from his sight. Like the innermost place in Egyptian shrines, there was no image of the god, but above the ark two human-headed bulls with wings, called cherubim, were put as guardians. Dr. E. B. Tylor ingeniously suggests that the origin of the cherubim as winged figures is to be found in the personification of the winds as divine agents carrying the fertilising pollen of the male flowers of the date palm to the stigmata of the female flowers. Be this as it may, the cherubim belong to the great class of fabled beasts, dragons, harpies, and sphinxes, which abound in classic myth; the "cherub," or Greek "gryps," surviving among us in the "griffin," half eagle,

half lion, often seen carved on castles and painted on coats-of-arms.

We must not think of this temple as at all like Christian cathedral or Mohammedan mosques, for its main purpose was as a place of sacrifice, and its arrangements approached nearer to those of a slaughter-house than a place of worship. The carcases of animals sacrificed were laid on an altar in the outer court in front of the temple, and near this altar was a great basin called "the brazen sea" for cleansing the priests, for whose use a number of rooms were built round the temple.

The erection of this beautiful building in place of the sacred tent added greatly to the power of the priesthood, who had already flocked to Jerusalem from local shrines. As priests of the ark, those who claimed to be of the "house" or family of Aaron had the chief place, and below them were the other priests, singers, and temple servants, ranked according to the duties given them.

But Solomon also raised temples to the gods of his foreign wives, and the general tendency of his intercourse with other nations was to efface whatever made Israel unlike them. It is during his reign that a class of men appear who were neither priests nor prophets, who spake no lofty thoughts moving men to noble endeavour, yet whose words carried weight. They are called "sages," or the "wise," and were gifted with the power of treating questions that lay near men's "business and bosoms" in a telling way, putting maxims of worldly wisdom, good counsel, and manners, here and there dealing with the higher aims of life, in pointed, pithy sayings, in proverb, and in fable.¹ All races, however barbarous, have their stock of proverbs, but the East is especially their home, and their crisp, short sentences catch the ear even when wordy preachings pass unheeded. Like our own many "wise saws," like the maxims of the Egyptians, whose influence

¹ See an excellent Introduction to the volume on "Ecclesiasticus" in the *Temple Bible*.

in Solomon's reign must be taken into account, they were caught up, and lived among the people, being finally gathered into the book of Proverbs and similar Hebrew writings both inside and outside the Bible. Tradition placed Solomon as the first of the sages. It is said that "his songs were a thousand and five"; that he spake three thousand proverbs; also that he had knowledge of all trees, from the stately cedar to the plant in the crannied wall, and of all beasts, birds, and fishes; his fame being so great that people, among them the queen of the Sabeans, flocked from every part to hear him.¹ Although the book of Proverbs and other books which bear his name were not compiled till long after his time, they may preserve some of his sayings, which, as coming from the lips of a king, would be the more heeded and repeated from mouth to mouth.

Among the most famous of the stories of Solomon's wisdom which survive in Arabian and Jewish traditions is the following from the book of Kings,² concerning two women who once came before him in the hall of justice.

One said: "I and that woman lived in the same house, and each of us bore a male child. In the night the son of this woman died. She rose, laid her dead son at my breast, and took my living child to her bosom. When I woke I had a dead child in my arms, but in the morning I saw that this child was not the son which I had borne." The other woman said: "No, the living boy is my son, and thine is the dead child."

Solomon then asked for a sword and said: "Cut the living child into two parts, and give half to the one and half to the other." Then tenderness for her child arose in the mother of the living child, and she said: "O my lord, give her the living child and slay it not"; but the other said: "Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it." Then the king

said: "Give her who prays me to spare it the living child; she is its mother."

Among the stories magnifying the wisdom of kings and sages common in the East³ there is one told of Gautama the Buddha, which strikingly resembles the foregoing. A woman came with her infant to a pool in order to bathe, and, leaving him on the bank, went down into the water. As soon as she had done so, a wicked woman, seeing the child and wishing to have it, said: "Friend, is this pretty baby yours? May I nurse it?" The mother replied, "Why not?" Upon which the evil-hearted woman took the infant, and, after nursing him a little while, ran off with him. The mother pursued screaming for her child, while the false woman boldly cried, "When didst thou own a child? It is mine." While the quarrel went on, they came near the Buddha's hall, and he, hearing the noise, asked what was the matter. Being told this, he said, "Will you abide by my judgment?" to which they both agreed. He then had a line drawn on the ground, and the child laid upon it, and, telling the false mother to seize its arms, and the real mother its legs, said: "He shall be son of her who pulls him over the line." The wicked woman agreed, for she was the stronger, but the mother, seeing that the child must suffer pain, said, weeping: "Let her take the boy; I cannot bear to see him hurt." Then the Buddha asked of those who stood around, "Whose hearts are tender to the children?" They replied, "O Pandit, mothers' hearts are tender!" Then he said, "Which think you is the mother?" and all answered, "She who let it go is its mother." He then restored the child to her, and sent her glad-hearted away.

But with all his acuteness Solomon was not wise enough to study the well-being of his people. The barbaric splendour of his court far exceeded that of David's, and ill contrasted with the modest state of Saul; moreover, it was

¹ Kings iv. 32-34.

² Kings iii. 16-28.

³ Cf. Denny's *Folk Lore of China*, p. 139.

maintained, like all selfish ease, at the cost of suffering and undue toil on the part of the many. Great discontent arose at the burdens laid upon the people in heavy taxes and forced labour, and the feeling was stronger among the tribes of the north, who had no share in the glory they upheld, palace and temple being in Jerusalem. Indeed, the ties between north and south had never been strong. They had been drawn together under one king, but the tribal feeling remained, and when David, who was of the house of Judah, was elected, Ephraim was jealous, for the "judges," from Joshua to Saul, had come from the house of Joseph.

The upshot was that, when Solomon died, the kingdom which the able hands of Saul and David had upreared fell asunder, never to be joined again. The immediate cause was that Rehoboam, his son, having refused the prayer of the people for lighter taxes, nearly all the tribes revolted, and, choosing their leader Jeroboam as king, set up the kingdom of Ephraim, or Israel, which comprised the larger and richer portion of Canaan, while the remnant who remained faithful to Rehoboam, barely two tribes, formed the smaller but longer-lived kingdom of Judah.

The separation was followed by wars, in which Judah was defeated, Jerusalem being pillaged by the Egyptians, who were friendly to Jeroboam; but now and again the two kingdoms were allied.

The annals of Israel are stormy; there being no settled line of kings, one warrior after another snatched the crown by force, creating frequent turmoil and civil war. There were disputes, too, of another sort which concern us more, because they show the general state of the people, of whom far too little account has, until our own day, been taken in history-books. Some of these disputes were about the gods, and they prove into what widespread neglect the ancient cults had fallen. As a substitute for the sacred temple, which remained to Judah, Jeroboam founded a priesthood and set

up golden bulls, probably old symbols of Jehovah-worship, at Dan and Bethel. But among the kings who followed him, doing "evil in the sight of Jehovah," was Ahab, a man of weak will, who, at the counsel of his wife Jezebel, a Tyrian princess, gave foremost place to the Phoenician god Baal. The prophets, of whom, though not idle, we hear but little since the days of Samuel, now came boldly forward to denounce with untempered zeal the faithlessness of the king, who, goaded by his queen, had them hunted and slain, and the altars of Jehovah thrown down. Chief among them was Elijah, a fierce and fearless man, who rebuked the king, and in the end won him back to service of Jehovah. Vivid sketches of this powerful prophet, of his courage and sufferings, of the miracles he was believed to have worked, were preserved in the traditions of the nation; like many other heroes, he disappears in a cloud of legend, carried in fiery chariot by a whirlwind to the skies, and when, many centuries after, a preacher in the prophet's garb of sheep-skin mantle fastened by leathern girdle, and uttering the prophet's message, appeared in Judæa, men called to mind the old story and the words of Malachi,¹ and said that Elijah had come to earth again.

The prophets, as the life of this man and others show, were not merely students and writers, tracing the footsteps of Jehovah in their nation's history, and recounting the story in glowing words, but men of action, moving in affairs of the state, making their voice heard in its councils, in the choice of kings, and in questions of peace or war. And so we find them delivering their message, "the word of Jehovah," not only in the open street, temple-court, and market-place, but in the palace itself and in houses of the great. The earlier among them were not "monotheists," or believers in one god, but "henotheists" or believers in one god as supr

¹ Mal. iv. 5.

among others. Jehovah was to them Israel's god, but they did not dispute the claims which other nations made on behalf of gods of their own, and it is not until the time of the later prophets that we find the exclusive belief reached that "all the gods of the nations are idols, but Jehovah made the heavens."

From the time that Samuel formed them into companies, the prophets tower far above the priests. The two classes had little in common. The duty of the priests began and ended with fulfilment of the details of the law, and, so long as they were employed to perform the ceremonies, it mattered not much to them to what god they performed them. While they were busying themselves concerning the correct mode of carrying out rules about rites, as if the well-being of a man's life depended on sacrificing "the two kidneys and the fat upon them, which is by the flanks, and caul above the liver,"¹ the prophet was insisting on conduct, on pure thoughts, words, and deeds, pointing out to the heedless the meaning of things past and present, and the significance of human life, asking in language that moves us as a solemn chant:—

Wherewithal shall I come before Jehovah? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousand rivers of oil?

Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly before thy god?²

Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with;they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to hear them.

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well.³

Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?

Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to Jehovah? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, that ye break every yoke?

Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

The prophets at last brought about the fall of the house of Ahab, seating upon the throne a king faithful to Jehovah, and from this time the chief place of that god was assured. The kingdom reached the height of its brief glory under Jeroboam II., during whose reign the great prophet-reformers, Amos, Hosea, and others, flourished. By this time, however, the "schools of the prophets" had sadly fallen off; unworthy, self-seeking men and those who caught at an excuse for shirking honest work had joined them, and the danger of its professors becoming a caste and stiffening into a class, fatal above all to the prophetic gift, the essence of which was its unfixed and fitful action, crept in and worked their ruin. Amos and his friends stood aloof from these companies, and were as one against the many; their fervid appeals found slight response among a people whose glaring vices were fast sapping the strength needed to withstand the restless foes around, ever watchful to pounce upon the weak. Among the nations then making rapid advance was Assyria, rising a second time to power, and throwing its shadow over the land as its armies moved westward on their conquering march. Before them great kingdoms of the East had fallen; the Syrians, who stood in their path, had been mowed down; the outlying tribes of Israel had been subdued, and, after the custom of the victors, the wealthier carried away captive. Samaria only stood in the way of the Assyrian army, and the folly of king Hosea, in breaking faith with Assyria and leaning towards Egypt, led to Israel's overthrow.

¹ Lev. iii. 10. ² Micah vi. 6-8.

³ Isa. i. 13-16.

⁴ Isa. lviii. 5-7.

Samaria, his capital, was besieged, and, being strongly placed, held out for three years, when disease and hunger made its defenders yield. The king and the greater number of the people were carried to a remote part of Assyria, whence they never returned, causing the hapless fate of the ten "lost tribes," who were scattered among stranger races, to give rise to the wildest guesses; eccentric persons, ignorant of the commonest facts of history, appearing at intervals to this day to contend that now one race, now another, be it English¹ or Red Indian or Irish, are the descendants of the Israelites! The vacant places were filled by colonists from Assyria, who, mixing with the remnant left behind, formed the "Samaritans," still a distinct people in Palestine, but now dwindled to less than 150 in number.

Thus the northern kingdom, after a troubled existence of about 250 years, came to an end, and from that time Jewish history is centred in the southern kingdom.

For the first century and a half the annals of Judah are dry and scanty. There was less of turmoil than in Israel, owing to a settled line of kings and a fixed centre of unity and worship; but the story of the state of religion is well-nigh the same. All over the country there were scattered remnants of the Canaanites who clung to the gods of their fathers, sacrificing "on every high hill, and under every green tree," and the result was that Jehovah was regarded only as one among these; images to Molech and other deities filled the streets and glittered from the housetops, and in the temple itself altars were raised to the sun and moon.

The kings leaned now to one party, now to another, the priests taught for hire, false prophets divined for money; the people loved to have it so, and the

only bright spot is the faithful witness of the great prophets.

One of the chief among these, Isaiah, lived about the court and temple, and his writings, apart from the exceeding beauty in which their lofty thoughts are expressed, are of value for the insight which they afford into life and manners in Judæa above 2,500 years ago.

His rare, deep sense of the purity and holiness of his god made him the more keenly awake to the evils around, and the more severe, yet sorrowful, in his rebuke. In scornful words he gives us graphic sketches of the vain triflers, of the women who "walk with stretched-forth neck and leering eyes, mincing as they go, and tinkling with their anklets," the main thought of whose trivial life is what they shall wear; of the men of purposeless life, or with bad purpose; of those who, regardless of the merciful laws of old, seize the land, lay "field to field," grind the poor, prey on the widow and the orphan; of the false guides who call evil good and darkness light; of the soothsayers who gull the foolish and overawe the timid in pretending to rule their fate by charm and spell, or to read the future in dreams and stars, and, in imitating the "squeaking and gibbering" of ghosts, to call back the spirits of the dead.

The watchful eye of Isaiah saw in the fall of Israel a forecast of the fate that awaited Judah. In the signs unheeded by the giddy crowd he read the anger of Jehovah, and the approach apace of punishment for sin; yet his hope was strong that the anger of God would not endure, and that the glory of old would return. Nor he alone; for among all the prophets, from the ninth century onwards, the same hope stirs their poor bright pictures of the future. It is easy to fix the exact meaning of what is written so long ago, the more so as figures of speech enter largely into them; but much confusion is avoided by bearing in mind this ruling idea of both priest and prophet—that the reign of David will

¹ Monthly magazines and annuals exist for the advocacy of this craze, and Exeter Hall has been the scene of frequent public debates on the question, "Are Englishmen Israelites?"

golden period of Israel's history, which would return with the advent of a king descended from David, and born in Bethlehem, his native place.

As thus Micah :—

" From thee, O Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be small among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall come forth one who shall rule over Israel, one whose descent is from ancient times. He shall stand and feed in the strength of Jehovah, in the majesty of his name ; his greatness shall spread to the ends of the earth, and in his time shall be peace. When the Assyrians come into the land we shall send seven shepherds to meet them ; yea, we shall send eight princes, and they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword. Then shall the remnant of Jacob be among the peoples like dew upon the herbs ; among great nations as a lion among the beasts of the forest."*

Thus Isaiah :—

" There shall come forth a rod from the stock of Jesse (the father of David), and a branch shall grow out of his roots ; and the spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and might, a spirit of knowledge, and the fear of Jehovah..... with justice shall he judge the helpless and give sentence to the meek of the land.....and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked ; justice shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. Then shall the wolf dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.....They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the land shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea."*

Thus Jeremiah and others, picturing the union of the scattered tribes :—

" Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell in safety, and this is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah is our righteousness."*

" In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof, and I will build it as in the days of old. That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith Jehovah who doeth this."*

" Afterward shall the sons of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their god, and David their king,

and shall fear Jehovah and his goodness in the latter days."*

" Rejoice, O daughter of Zion ! Be glad, O daughter of Jerusalem ! Behold thy king comes to thee, righteous and victorious, a kindly man riding on an ass, a she ass's colt. Then shall the war-chariots be cast out of Ephraim and the horsemen from Jerusalem ; the weapons of war shall be broken, and he shall proclaim peace to the heathen. He shall rule from sea to sea from the Euphrates to the end of the earth."*

And to quote Isaiah once more :—

" Thine eyes shall view the king in his beauty ; they shall see a land that reacheth afar off..... Thou shalt view Zion the city of our solemnities ; thine eyes shall see Jerusalem an easy habitation, a tent that wandereth not, whose nails are never drawn out, neither are any of the cords thereof rent, but where Jehovah shall be for us a place of broad rivers and streams whereon shall go no galley with oars, neither shall stately ship pass thereby.....and no inhabitant shall say, I am sick ; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their sin."*

The hopes which the prophets thus express concerning the future of their nation are known as the "Messianic," from the Hebrew word for "anointed," which was applied to kings and priests, on whom the holy oil was poured, and hence the king who was to spring from the house of David is sometimes spoken of, not only as "son of David," but as "Messiah," or the "anointed one." The form which such an expectation took varied at different times in different minds ; in some it was tinged with sadness, yet loftier and wider than among the prophets quoted above ; later still, as will be seen, it was wild and tawdry ; but one feature is common to all—the belief in a Golden Age, vision of the poets and seers of every land, for which holy and earnest men have longed and laboured, and which, in this world, where they have waged such splendid fight, has been the impetus to all patience, all noble doing. And though the dreams of Hebrew patriots and prophets never came to pass in the form in which their fancy had shaped them, they are being slowly fulfilled in larger ways wherever

* Micah v. 2, ff.
* Isa. xi. 1-9.
* Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

* Amos ix. 11, 12.

* Hosea iii. 5.
* Zech. ix. 9, 10.
* Isa. xxxvii. 17-24.

gentle hands are ministering and human voices are uplifted against wrong.

“ The years are slow, the vision tarieth long,
And far the end may be ;
But one by one the ancient fiends of wrong
Go out and leave earth free ! ”

Many piles of books have been written, many millions of sermons preached, about this Messianic hope ; but all that need be said at present is comprised in these few words, to which a remark or two should be added, as an aid in clearing away a crowd of false notions about the meaning of the Jewish Scriptures, and chiefly of the prophets' writings.

People are apt to forget that, for the understanding of the books which make up the Old and New Testaments, no slight knowledge of ancient history, of Eastern customs and modes of speech, is needful, and the difficulty is increased by the changes which these books have undergone in translation out of languages whose nice shades of expression cannot well be reproduced. Yet these writings, as to the meaning of which widely different opinions exist among the learned, are, with injury to themselves and confusion to their readers, scattered broadcast and placed in the hands of unlettered persons, both young and old, as if some charm or magical power attended them by which they could be made clear at a glance. And what might have been made clear with small effort on the reader's part is too often so ill-arranged and maltreated as to quite hinder this, for, in their eagerness to support foregone conclusions, Christians, in receiving the books comprising the Old Testament from the Jews, have so dealt with them as to entirely misrepresent their meaning. For example, the writings of the prophets have been sorted regardless of the time when they were penned ; placed according to length, and not according to date or importance ; the words of men who lived many years apart have been mixed together, and in cutting up the books into chapters, which often wrongly “divide the word of truth,” tables of contents

have been added which are utterly false, and which, allowed to remain in Bibles issued to this day, betray wilful ignorance. One glaring instance of this occurs in the chapter-headings of a poem called the “ Song of Solomon,” the subject of which is the virtue of pure and constant love. A beautiful young shepherdess who is betrothed to a shepherd is taken from her village home in fair Galilee, where the “ vines flourish, the tender grapes appear, and the pomegranates bud,” to the court of Solomon. She resists temptation, and, pining ever for her home and true love, is at last sent back by the king, and marries him to whom she had given her heart. The poem would never have been admitted among the Jewish Scriptures, and indeed was tardily received, but that the caprice of the rabbis saw the love of God for Israel set forth in its figures of speech ; and some of the early Christian writers, who were slaves to the wildest fancies, “ explained ” it as designed to exhibit the love of Jesus Christ for the Church which they believed he founded, even interpreting the closing verse, where the bride says : “ Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices,” as “ the Church praying for Christ's coming ”!

The same writers, in dealing with the prophetic books, were hampered by the old notion that Jehovah made known future events through seers ; and, assuming that the foretellings of these men concerning a “ Messiah ” or “ Christ ” (from Greek “ Christos ” — anointed) were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, forced a meaning disputed by the Jews to this day, and altogether foreign to the books themselves, into the whole of the Old Testament. Passage after passage from Genesis to Malachi was quoted as supporting that notion ; where the simple truth is that throughout those books there is not a single verse, taken in its plain meaning, and torn away from the writings to which it belongs, can be shown to foretell :

life, or death of Jesus, or, indeed, any other event which took place after each writer's time.

Such harmful and unfair use of these ancient writings will go on until they are re-arranged, issued with truthful notes and comments as to their origin and meaning, and read in the light of knowledge of the times when they were composed, and of the events either happening, or which it needed only keen foresight to see must happen. Then will their real value and peerless beauty be seen, and the danger, which all devout minds desire to avert—namely, that people, angry at having been misled, will cast them aside as fables and vague talk of bewildered dreamers—pass away. Because it will be seen that the greatness of the prophets could never be in writing down word-puzzles in which lurk dates and mystic hints about the birth of men centuries hence, or the fall of kingdoms, and the end of the world; but in setting forth the certain doom of the people and nation that forget God, and the beauty of the steps of the preachers of righteousness as “heralds of good tidings.”

Returning to Isaiah, we find him comforting King Ahaz, when dismayed at the approach of the armies of Syria and Israel, with the promise that Jehovah would give him a sign of their defeat in the birth of some child (perhaps one expected by the king or by the prophet himself), who should be named “Immanuel,” meaning “God with us,” and declaring that, before such child was old enough to know good from evil, Judah should be free from danger.¹

The piety and promise of the youth of Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, over whom Isaiah rejoiced, giving him, after the manner of the East, long and high-

¹ “It is not in an arbitrary ‘decree of God,’ but in the nature of man, that a veil shuts down on the facts of to-morrow, for the soul will not have us read any other cipher than that of cause and effect.”—Emerson, *The Over-Soul*.

² Isa. vii. 14, ff.

sounding titles,² was fulfilled when he came to the throne, for he swept away the pillars and images of the gods, and the altars on “high places.” The chief event of that time was the sudden destruction of a vast number of the Assyrian army by one of the awful plagues which at times desolate the East. The Syrian nations had rebelled against Sennacherib and been worsted. Hezekiah had dared to resist him, and now, as he approached to punish—

“The might of the Gentiles, untouched by the sword,
Had melted like snow at the blast of the Lord.”

The event brought vividly before the Judæans the deliverance of old, when their fathers saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore, and the psalms of that time, as the forty-sixth and seventy-sixth, witness to the impulse which it gave to the worship of Jehovah, who, in smiting the invader, had shown his care for the city in whose holy place he dwelt “between the cherubim.” So they sang:—

“In Judah is God known,
His name is great in Israel :
For at Salem he made his tabernacle,
And his resting place in Zion.
There brake he the arrows of the bow,
The shield, the sword, and the battle !
The proud were stripped, they slept their sleep,
And the men of might found not their hands ;
At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,
Both chariot and horse lie fallen.”

But the danger over, the people backslid, and it was not until the reign of Josiah that a more lasting reform came about. It appears that, while some repairs were going on in the temple, the chief priest, more likely by design than

¹ “Unto us a child has been born, a son given us, government shall be laid upon his shoulders; and men shall call him ‘Wonderful-Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting-Father, Prince of Peace,’ for the increase of the government and for peace without end upon the throne of David and over his kingdom” (Isa. ix. 6, 7. Cf. Spencer's *Ceremonial Institutions*, pp. 156-159).

accident, found a roll, "the book of the law of Jehovah given to Moses." This was taken to the king, who, when he learnt what judgments were written in it against idol worship and neglect of the commandments, rent his clothes in token of grief, and ordered the heads of the people to be assembled that the book might be read to them. This done, he made known his will that Jehovah only should be worshipped, and then began a course of relentless persecution. Images and altars were once more thrown down, the priests who had served them, the wizards and the soothsayers, were slain, and a great feast called the Passover kept in solemn splendour. Some writers think that by the "book of the law" the first five books of the Bible are meant, as the material for these, which, as we saw, was collected by the priests in the time of the early kings, had been, some century before the reign of Josiah, worked up by the prophets, who, beginning the history with the days of the patriarchs, brought it down to the conquest of Canaan. Others, with more reason on their side, think that it meant the fifth book only, Deuteronomy, the contents of which apply so clearly to the evils which had long prevailed.

It was at this time that the second of the notable invasions of Judah occurred. Great movements of races, cramped for room and eager for plunder, were taking place, and among the most warlike and lawless were stranger hordes called the Scythians,² who greatly harassed the land as they rode towards Egypt, but who were at last beaten back or bought off. But a more fruitful cause of sorrow arose through the death of Josiah. Against the advice of the prophet Jeremiah and that monarch himself, he had opposed the passage of the king of Egypt on his march to the Euphrates against the Assyrians, whose power was on the wane, and, wounded in battle, died before he could reach Jerusalem. The nation

mourned his loss, the prophet "Jeremiah lamented for him, and all the singing men and singing women to this day," wrote the chronicler. The faith of the faithful was shaken; in their despair and bewilderment some of the people ascribed the trouble to neglect of the older gods, and the worship of these was revived, while the reckless gave way to excesses of sin, causing the prophet to pour forth the sorrow of his soul!

"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people.....Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people and go from them ! for they go from evil to evil, and weary themselves to commit wickedness.¹.....When I would comfort myself against grief my heart is faint within me. The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."²

Jerusalem will become "a heap and den of dragons; the cities of Judah desolate, without an inhabitant." Assyria received its death-blow at the hands of the Medes (an Aryan-speaking race) and the Babylonians, and in these rising powers Jeremiah saw the scourge where-with Jehovah would punish the Judeans. They were enraged at his gloomy fore-bodings; they mocked and persecuted him—as in every age its prophets are stoned or scouted --threw him into prison, and shrank from killing him only because he spoke in the "name of Jehovah." And yet, while uttering the despondent truths which have made "jeremiad" a by-word, he told them that when the "seventy" years during which, speaking in round and sacred numbers, they were to be exiled from fatherland had passed, Jehovah would gather them again to Judea:—

"After those days I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts, and will be their god, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying 'Know Jehovah,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest."

³ 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14.

⁸ Cf. *The Psalms, by Four Friends*, p. 125.

¹ Jer. ix. 1, ff.

¹ Jer. ix. 1, ff. ² Jer. viii. 18, 20.

³ Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

Not in what they have, but in what they are, is their life :—

“ Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am Jehovah exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, saith Jehovah.”

Among the Hebrew writings called forth at a time when men’s hearts were failing them, and the success of the wicked puzzled them, the book of Job may perhaps be placed. Perhaps, because many learned men think it was not written till a later time, but its exact date and authorship can never be settled. Neither is it known to what happy chance a work so unlike any of the other canonical books was admitted into the Jewish Scriptures; enough that it has preserved an ancient poem of wondrous beauty and majesty.

The riddle which it seeks to solve is that world-wide one which once so greatly perplexed man: why the good often suffer, and why the wicked often prosper; and the author, instead of writing a tedious treatise, puts the matter in the form of a story or “drama,” *setting forth action*, as that word means.

There was a man named Job, who lived in the land of Uz. He was very rich, blessed with “seven” sons and “three” daughters; and there was none so upright as he in all the earth, or so kind to his fellows; “when the ear heard him, then it blest him.....and he caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy.” One day, when the angels of Jehovah appeared before him, Satan, whose duties were to act as a spy on men’s doings, taunted the god that Job did not serve him for naught, adding that, if he were stripped of all that he had, “he would curse thee to thy face.” So Jehovah, to test the truth of this, made odd parley with Satan, and gave him full power over Job short of taking his life. Blow after blow then fell upon the accused man, robbers seized his

cattle and killed his servants, death smote his children, and he himself was made loathsome with leprosy. Stripped of everything, his wife bade him curse Jehovah and die; but he said, “Shall we receive good at his hand, and not evil also?” and would not “sin with his lips.” Then three old friends, hearing of his troubles, came to him, and, after sitting in silence “seven days and seven nights,” Job, moved by a sympathy the more intense because repressed, poured out his grief and cursed the day of his birth. His friends, taking the common view of the matter that if ill befalls a man he deserves it, saw in all Job’s sufferings the just punishment of Jehovah for some sin, for said one, “Whoever perished being innocent, and when were the righteous cut off?” But Job, knowing that he had done no wrong, denied that his affliction was a proof of sin, and, complaining that the power of Jehovah is used to crush him, upbraids his God: “Is it good unto thee that thou should oppress and despise the work of thine own hands.....Thou knowest that I am not wicked,” and in touching pathos appeals to the shortness of life: “Cease, then, let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness without any order, and where the light is as darkness.” He takes comfort in the thought that one near to him as kin will arise and avenge his wrongs:—

“ I know that my God lives,
And that he shall arise, the last, upon the earth”—

a passage which, with those following it, has, oddly enough, been quoted as referring to Jesus of Nazareth, and as a proof of the resurrection of the body!

A younger friend now appears, and, urging that suffering is sometimes sent for man’s good, reproves Job for vindicating himself instead of justifying “the ways of God to man.”

So the debate runs on, Job adhering

to what he has said, his friends getting angrier with him, even to charging him with wicked acts, till Jehovah himself answers him "out of the whirlwind," and in words of unsurpassed grandeur bids him look on the world around and learn the folly of contending with its Maker. Then the troubled man confesses his fault and is forgiven; twice as much as he had before is bestowed upon him, and "in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job." After all, the author of the poem evades the question he has raised. He failed to see that nobleness and goodness have nothing whatever to do with what men have; not even with happiness, which thousands of good men have died failing to possess; that "the only happiness a brave man ever troubled himself with asking much about was, happiness enough to get his work done,"¹ leaving the rest to take care of itself, because "the well-being of our souls depends only on what we are."

At last the storm broke. Egypt was crushed at Carchemish by the Babylonians, or, as they should now be called, the Chaldaeans, a name which they took from the Chaldaei, or Kaldu, a conquering race of uncertain origin, who appear in history during the ninth century B.C. The peoples subject to Egypt passed under their rule, the Judaeans submitting quietly; but four years afterwards a rebellion brought the armies of Nebuchadrezzar, the conqueror of Nineveh, to Jerusalem. The city was taken, the temple treasures seized, and a large number of the wealthier classes carried across the Syrian desert to Babylon. In less than ten years the stubborn people again revolted, and the Chaldaean king once more laid siege to the famous city. It was bravely defended; as breaches were made in the walls, stones were taken from the palaces and houses to

stop them. Famine so raged that noble ladies picked garbage from the dung-heaps and parents ate their own children; and at last, after a year and a half, the Chaldaeans forced an entrance, this time to blend no mercy with their vengeance. The ringleaders were put to death; the king, after seeing his sons killed, had his eyes plucked out and was carried prisoner with large numbers of his subjects to Babylon. The city was then given over to the soldiers for plunder, and afterwards set on fire; the "holy and beautiful house where their fathers praised Jehovah," cherubim, altar, ark, all burnt.

So fell Jerusalem, in the sight of whose ruins from the heights around the vanquished poured out their lamentations, because "abroad the sword bereaveth and at home is death."

" Alas ! how doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people !
 How is she become as a widow ! she that was great among the nations,
 The princes among the provinces, how is she become tributary !
 Captive is Judah gone forth because of affliction and because of great servitude :
 She dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest :
 All her persecutors overtook her in the midst of her straits.
 Men ! unto you do I call, all ye that pass by ; behold, and see
 If there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow,
 Which is done unto me,
 Wherewith Jehovah hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger."²

The land was so desolated that scarcely a man of note was left in it, only "the poor to be vine-dressers and husbandmen," and a few faithful like Jeremiah, for he, though invited to Babylon by the king, preferred to remain. On the breaking out of a third tumult, in which the Chaldaean governor was killed, many fled to Egypt, forcing Jeremiah to go with them, while, another batch being exiled, the land was well-nigh cleared of every Judaean.

¹ *Past and Present*, p. 134.

² *Lamentations i. 1-4, 12.*

IV.—THE EXILE IN BABYLON, AND THE RETURN

THE vast desert which stretches across Africa and Western Asia is broken first by the hills that enclose the valley of the Nile, and then by the rising ground watered by the Tigris and Euphrates. This fertile, alluvial land, native home of the wheat-plant, invited the settlement and favoured the growth of great empires, so that it became at a very remote time a centre of civilisation, equal to, if not greater in importance than, Egypt, with which power its people long contended for the mastery over Syria. It was here, as we have seen already, that the Babylonian branch of the Semites had settled, and become the ruling population, fixing their capital at the city which, translating its Akkadian name into their own tongue, they called Bab-el, or "gate of God."

During the brilliant reign of Nebuchadrezzar the kingdom was extended from the Tigris to the Mediterranean, and Babylon became the most splendid capital of ancient times. It stood on both banks of the Euphrates, and was built in the form of a square, each side of which is said to have been fifteen miles long; but of so vast a walled province, as it might be called, the greater part was park, field, and garden. Among the most famous buildings was the king's palace, with its mimic mountain-terraces of trees and flowers called "hanging gardens," accounted among the "seven wonders of the world." There was also the lofty Ziggurat of Bel, raised by Nebuchadrezzar in seven tower-like stories, faced with the colours of the sun, moon, and five planets, the topmost story being crowned with a temple. It was around this building that the legend had grown how the god had baulked the efforts of the workmen to raise it high as heaven to save themselves against another deluge, by confusing their speech.

Babylon was not only a seat of gaiety and worship, but of commerce, art, and learning. There the ships called on their voyages between Arabia and India, bringing the rough products of those lands to be exchanged for its finely-wrought goods; there the far-famed Chaldean astronomers watched the stars, and strove to read in their movements the fate of men and empires. Palm-groves still relieve the tameness of the landscape, and in early spring the plain is covered with grass and flowers; but, save by Arabs and a few villagers, the ancient sites are deserted, and the remains of canals that once carried the surplus waters to barren parts wind across swampy flats to which, if well drained, the fruitfulness of old would return. No piles of stately ruins, as at Athens, Baalbek, or Thebes, mark where Babylon and Nineveh once stood; shapeless rubbish heaps, happily undisturbed for centuries, are the graves of palaces and temples yielding for our wonderment and knowledge priceless treasures of literature and art; seals with tiny images of gods and priests; monster slabs depicting the exploits of mighty men or shaped into winged human-headed bulls and lions; book-cylinders and tablets, whose strange arrow-like strokes are not only complete annals of the empire, but range from spelling-lessons to works on astronomy, from lists of charms to ward off evil and tables of omens from dreams, to epics and hymns to heaven-gods.

It was over this land that the Judæan were scattered. Although "stripped bare," as the word by which they spoke of the Exile means, they were, on the whole mildly treated, living under their own elders, unhindered in the practice of their religion, and permitted to settle as farmers and traders, some among them

even rising to high office in the state. While the more easy-going strove to make the best of their lot by adopting the beliefs and customs of the Chaldeans, the firmness of others kept Israel from becoming so merged among the conquerors as to efface what had hitherto kept it apart from races around. To these faithful ones the kindest treatment could never have atoned for banishment from the father-land, and for the destruction of the holy shrine; "by the river of Babylon," which, centuries before, their barbarous ancestors crossed and recrossed in their wanderings, "they had sat down and wept when they remembered Zion." Their yearnings for lost home and temple, expressed in psalms, were nourished by hopes of freedom drawn from the words of dead and living prophets, when "the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and enter Zion with shouts," when "everlasting joy shall be upon their heads, and sorrow and sadness flee away." The influences of the Exile were very marked, the devout, drawn together by their common needs, met from time to time, most likely every Sabbath, for the reading of the law and for prayer, the value of which they learned when cut off from temple and altar. And, although after the return the rebuilt temple was the chief seat of worship and only place of sacrifice, the "synagogues," so called from a Greek word meaning "assembly," which were founded in Palestine and wherever else the Jews were scattered, were the prime means of spreading a knowledge of the law and maintaining the faith and unity of the race. For they did what a temple and priesthood confined to one place could not do; and, although the importance of the temple was not lessened, the class who read and explained the law rose by degrees above those who carried it out. While in Babylon, the priests busied themselves in drawing up new laws, grafting them upon old ones, and re-casting the traditions and legends relating to the creation, as given in the first chapter of Genesis; to "paradise" (a Persian word

meaning an "enclosed garden"), and to man's fall, of which a like myth is found in the sacred books of the ancient Persian religion; and to the Deluge, which had its rise in Chaldea, a land exposed to violent floods.

On the death of Nebuchadrezzar, after a reign of forty-three years, the power of Chaldea declined, and the victories of Cyrus, king of Persia, over the Medes and other peoples set aglow the hopes of the exiles. It was about this time, when the rapid success of the Persians turned all eyes upon them, that one of the loftiest and richest minds among the exiles poured forth, in words of unsurpassed grandeur, the feelings which stirred in noble breasts. Since his name is unknown, he is commonly called the "second Isaiah," because his writings are found in the last twenty-seven chapters of the book of Isaiah. His themes are the advent of Cyrus, by whom Jehovah, declared to be the only true god, is to deliver Israel; and the sufferings of the pious and faithful servants of Jehovah, which shall have their reward in the return of the ancient glory and the ancient faith, this in its fulness gathering into itself all mankind. He opens with words of good cheer, bidding the prophets comfort the people, because Jehovah is on his way to save them. He -

"Will come like a valiant one, while his arm ruleth for him; his reward is with him, and his recompence before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young."¹

Compared to the tree stumps which men hew down, and burning part thereof in the fire wherewith to warm themselves, make of the rest a god, what an Almighty and wise God is Jehovah! "To whom will ye liken him?"

"Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood it since the foundation of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the va-
of the earth, so that the inhabitants thereof see-

as locusts, that stretcheth out the heavens as gauze, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.....Who hath made yonder heavens? It is he that bringeth out their host by number, that calleth them all by names, by whose infinite might and power not one is wanting.....Hast thou not seen? hast thou not heard? Jehovah is the Everlasting, the maker of the ends of the earth; he fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of his understanding. Youths may faint and be weary, and the strongest men may stumble; but they that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall lift up their wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.”¹

Wherefore the exiles need not fear—

“ For I, Jehovah, thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour, have given Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.....I am Jehovah, and beside me there is no saviour; I will work, and who shall hinder? Thus saith Jehovah, your Redeemer, for your sake I have sent to Babylon, and will drive them all away, even the Chaldeans into their proud ships.”²

Cyrus is spoken of as the “anointed,”³ not as Messiah, but as the chosen instrument to free Israel by smiting the Babylonians. For in the second Isaiah we find the ideas about the Messiah altogether changed. He is no longer expected as a king of David’s house, or indeed a king at all; but portrayed as the righteous “servant of Jehovah,” who cries not, whose voice is not heard in the street, who, as a son of Israel, must bear its sorrows, be bruised for its iniquities, and the measure of whose sufferings shall be the measure of its after-glory, because for that servant’s sake, Jehovah, to whom in common belief atonement must be made, will be merciful. Now, it is under such a figure of speech, not uncommon to the Hebrew prophets, that Isaiah, as he himself declares, speaks of the pious section of Israel, not of any one man; and it is these pious ones who, as a part of the nation, must be “wounded for its sins,” and thus secure from its appeased god the reward of that self-sacrifice in the good of the whole. Thus did the prophet dimly see a truth which is the life

of the world, and which to Jesus, with his higher conceptions of God’s relation to man, came with such power that he not only proclaimed it, but died for it.

At last the looked-for event occurred. The soldiers of Cyrus vainly tried to scale or batter down the thick and lofty walls of Babylon, and so had recourse to secret measures. They dug a canal which diverted the waters of the Euphrates, and then, while the besieged, trusting to their strong defences, were feasting, crossed the river-bed under cover of the darkness, crept under the unguarded water-gates, and took the city.

“ The under-world is stirred below, and comes forth to meet thee :
It stirreth up the shades for thee, even all the leaders of the earth :
With one mouth they cry to thee,
Thou, too, art an empty shadow as we : thou art become like unto us!
Thy pride is brought down to the under-world,
and the melody of thy lutes,
How art thou fallen from heaven, O shining one, son of the morning !”⁴

Soon after this great victory Cyrus gave the Jews, as we may now call them, leave to return to their native land and rebuild their temple, the sacred vessels of which he restored. Whether or not any service rendered to him by the exiles had prompted this kindly act, it was a wise one, because it secured him the gratitude of a brave people, who, thus placed on the western outposts of the empire, would be its trusty defenders against attacks from Egypt. In such psalms as the 126th—

“ When Jehovah brought home the captivity of Zion,
We were like them that dream,
Then was our mouth filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing”—

we read what joy their release from bondage gave the Jews. But while some thousands, and these mainly the priestly and poorer classes—“the chaff,”

¹ Isa. xl. 21-31. ² Isa. xliii. 3-11.
³ Isa. xlv. 1.

⁴ Isa. xiv. 9-12. The quotations from the Isaiahs are from the scholarly translation by Professor T. K. Cheyne.

as they were called—availed themselves of the leave to return, the larger number, “the wheat,” preferred to remain in the land which had so long been their home. Indeed, when we remember that nearly fifty years had passed since the fall of Jerusalem, it is clear that most of the earliest captives must have been dead; others then young had grown old, and, to those who had been born in Chaldea, Judea was a strange land, round which no memories of childhood or regrets of manhood gathered. No wonder, therefore, that these lacked zeal and courage to pluck up roots firmly struck in their rich foster-land and transplant them in barren Judea, and that they shrank from a long journey across an unbroken desert where supplies of food and water were fitful, and which was infested with robber-tribes. But they who braved these dangers were buoyed up with the hope of seeing Jerusalem, and taking part in the glorious work of raising the fallen temple. They cheered the way with songs which they could not sing “in a strange land,” and at last, after months of toil and hardship, reached their journey’s end. They found the land desolate, for what the mad havoc of war had spared had been destroyed by the wild tribes that swept over it; but they set to work with a will to “build up the old ruins, and rear the places that had long lain waste.” An altar to Jehovah was raised at Jerusalem on the temple site, and the foundation of another temple laid amidst songs of praise and sound of trumpets and cymbals; but an untoward event hindered the completion of the building until the reign of Darius. The Samaritans came forward with offers of help, saying, “We likewise, as ye do, obey Jehovah!”¹ but their aid was spurned because they were not pure “sons of Israel” a foolish blunder, for the Jews had more or less intermarried with other races from the Canaanites downwards, and among the returned exiles were members of the Ten Tribes,

who had fewer scruples than the Judeans. At any rate, the refusal so angered the Samaritans that they laid false charges against the Jews before Cyrus, who withdrew his permission for the rebuilding, and thus arose undying hate between the two races.

The arrival of the Persians in Babylon had not only given freedom to the Jews, but, in the course of time, wrought certain changes in their customs and beliefs, influencing these the more because the religion of the Persians, who were an Aryan speaking race, was far purer and loftier in kind than any other with which the Jews had come in contact. In their oldest hymns they praise one Creator of all things, of whom they had no image, and whom they worshipped on hill-top with symbol of fire. Beneath him they pictured hostile hosts of light and darkness, the head of the evil spirits being Ahriman, who sought to spoil the good work of God, tempted the first pair to sin, and brought death among mankind. But his triumph was for a time only, and one day the “hero of prophets,” Saoshyas, a saviour, virgin born, would renew the earth, and make even the wicked pure.

Now, the Jews already believed in angels dwelling around Jehovah; but from the time of their contact with the Persians we find this belief much enlarged, orders of angels, whose names are borrowed from the Persian, playing a very active part between heaven and earth, ruling the elements and seasons, and placed as guardian angels over nations and persons.² Jehovah was said to create such spirits daily; the good deeds and thoughts of a man are transformed into them. In the beautiful story from the Persian sacred book quoted in the *Childhood of the World*, they await his soul with welcome as enters Paradise.

The Jews had regarded Jehovah as author of both good and evil; but n their views changed, and they began

¹ Esdras v. 69.

² Cf. Matt. xviii. 10.

believe in crowds of demons, ruled over by an arch-fiend, the ideas about whom were transferred to Satan. These demons had their home in the middle air, and were invisible, because "the Holy One, blessed is he, had created their souls, and was about to create their bodies when the Sabbath set in"; but "if power were given to the eye to see them, no creature could exist." Every one has 10,000 at his right hand and 1,000 at his left hand, and, since they rule chiefly at night, no man should greet another lest he salute a demon. They haunt lonely spots, often assume the shape of beasts, and it is their presence in the bodies of men and women which is the cause of madness and other diseases.

The Persians believed in the resurrection of the dead, in a heaven called "Paradise," and also "house of hymns," because the angels were said to sing hymns there; in a hell, or "house of destruction," and in a bridge between the two places, along which the souls of the pious alone passed in safety, while the wicked fell from it into hell. For awakening the dead, restoring life destroyed by death, and holding the last judgment, the great "prophet" Saoshyas will appear.¹ To what extent these ideas were borrowed by the Jews, or were worked out by themselves, is uncertain, as no traces of advance beyond their crude notions about "sheol" are found till long after the return from exile. We know that the influence of the Persians spread in divers forms through the Jews who remained in Babylon, and who had settled westward in Persia, for as late as the third century before Jesus the feast of Purim was introduced from thence, and the influence of Jewish schools in Babylon long survived the destruction of the Jewish State.

For some sixty years after the second temple was finished the records of Jewish history are scanty. Enough, however,

exists to show that the zeal of the exiles had died away and a lax state of things crept in, bringing with it the old danger that other gods would be worshipped by the side of Jehovah. But a great change came about on the arrival of a second batch of exiles under the lead of Ezra, a priest and scribe "who had prepared his heart to seek the law of Jehovah and to do it."

The scribes, a class who from this time take a leading place in Jewish history, were in bygone days clerks of the state, to whom, as skilled in writing, fell the duty of copying the records, making out lists of soldiers, etc., and afterwards of transcribing Israel's law and history, which, as has been said, became its sacred books.

Ezra was armed with full power to reform and uphold the religion of his fathers, and he set about his work with ardour. As a strict Jew, one thing greatly shocked him—namely, to find that the "chosen" of Jehovah had not kept themselves apart from other people, some among them, priests as well, having married foreign women. Bowed down with grief, and wearing all its signs, he besought Jehovah to forgive this sin, and gave the offenders no peace until they had vowed that these women, and their dear children too, should be sent away! It was a terribly harsh and cruel thing to do, for it was better that the Jews as a *race* should perish utterly than that the law of unselfishness and justice should be set aside, and the love of fathers for innocent mothers and little ones crushed; but the history of this tearful world is full of such examples of misguided, loveless zeal.

That larger views than these were taken by some is shown in the fresh and lovely story of Ruth the Moabitess, which is thought to belong to this time.

A Jew named Elimelech, with his wife Naomi, and their two sons, driven by famine from Judah, had settled in Moab. In the course of time the father and sons died, and Naomi, hearing that "Jehovah had visited his people in giving them

¹ Haug's *Essays on the Parsis*, p. 313.

bread," resolved to return to Judah. She begged the widows of her two sons to stay in their native land, and, after hesitating a little, Orpah kissed her and returned "unto her people and gods"; but Ruth refused to stay behind, saying, "Intreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; Jehovah do so to me and more also (a form of oath to the god) if aught but death part thee and me."

So they came together to Bethlehem, Naomi's native place, and, it being harvest time, Ruth went out to glean, and "her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging to Boaz, a rich man and near kinsman of Elimelech," who, coming among his reapers, asked who she was, and learned the story of her devotion to the forlorn Naomi. He approached her with kind words, and made her, when the resting hour came, join the reapers and eat with them, quietly saying to them, "Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reprobate her not, and let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them that she may glean them, and rebuke her not."

When she returned well laden to Naomi and told her story, Naomi instructed Ruth to claim her rights under the "levirate," by which the next relative was required to marry the widow of his brother or other kinsman, and the end was that Boaz took her as his wife. Whatever other motives the writer of this exquisite story may have had, it certainly tended to show that love and duty were to prevail over laws against intermarriage with the "stranger," and he even makes Ruth to be mother of Obed, from whom King David was descended.

We hear no more of Ezra for thirteen years, a time which he probably spent, with other scribes, known as "men of

the Great Synagogue," in reshaping the records of his nation into one Book of the Law, or the Pentateuch, nearly in the same form in which it still exists. That is to say, Ezra added to the older version of that work the laws and legends drawn up and arranged by Jewish priests in Babylon, and thus it received its final touches at the hands of those who regarded everything from a priestly standpoint. The voices of the prophets were hushed, for Ezekiel, with his fantastic figures and tedious details about the temple and its "courts for boiling and baking," has small title, despite some high moral teaching, to foremost place among them. Even Malachi, the last of the prophets, who asks, "Have we not all one father?" fell below the lofty standard of Amos and others, and promoted the narrow ideas of Ezra. So it came to pass that the simple desert code of Moses, with such unwritten laws as applied it to after times, with the traces of nature worship and still lower idolatries, appeared, after excluding image-worship, human sacrifices, magic, etc., as a great body of rules dealing with the priests, the temple services and sacrifices, the feasts, chiefly those of Passover, Weeks, Tabernacles, New Moon, and the Sabbath; also with foods clean and unclean; trial by ordeal; and a crowd of details whose only interest and value now consist in the light which they throw upon the history of religious rites and ceremonies.

Thus arose the "Thorah" or "Torah," meaning "Law," which was made binding on every Jew as the law of Jehovah; and, that no one might plead ignorance of it, Ezra appointed stated times for its reading in public. In this he was aided by the arrival of Nehemiah, a devout Jew, cupbearer to the Persian king. Moved with pity for the forlorn state of his country, he was at his own prayer made governor of Judea, and on arriving at once set about rebuilding the walls and gateways of Jerusalem, the ruined condition of which laid the city open

constant attack. So hindered were the workmen by the jealous tribes around that "the builders every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded";¹ but the bulwarks were at last completed, and the people were gathered in peaceful assembly to hear the law read. In the vivid account given in the book of Nehemiah,² Ezra is said to have paused from time to time in his reading that the Levites or priests' assistants might "give the sense and cause them to understand the reading." This shows that the law had to be translated or explained, the reason being that the Hebrew language in which it was written was then a dead language, for the exiles had dropped its use during their captivity, and acquired the mixed tongue called Aramaic or Syro-Chaldaic, which remained the written and spoken language of Palestine till after the time of Jesus; indeed, it is, with certain changes, the speech of the peasants there to this day. Then, again, some parts of the law were so old that their meaning and first purpose were forgotten, or had no bearing on the state of things which had arisen during the changing fortunes of the Jews. That which was adapted to Babylon was not suited to Judæa, and hence arose not only Aramaic versions of the sacred book, but the famous body of oral or unwritten law as "a hedge";³ about the written law, to protect and explain it, to find in its sentences and words,⁴ or, failing these, in the very shape of its letters, meanings that could be converted into rules applying to any and every case that might arise.

The veneration in which the "thorah" came to be held knew no bounds and led to the wildest ideas. It was said to be one of the "seven" things which

existed before the world, and to have supplied the pattern by which Jehovah made all things.¹ He himself, as Chief Rabbi, wears phylacteries (slips of parchment with passages from the "thorah" written on them, bound as charms round the forehead and arm), and spends three hours every day in reading the "thorah" and discussing it with his angels! While the world and all therein was made in six days, the law was not given till after forty days, and then in every language, Israel alone having the wisdom to accept it. "Turn it and again turn it," said the scribes, "for the all is therein, and thy all is therein,"² and in this belief they stretched its words and commands to cover the life of every Jew in its smallest details. As time rolled on, the oral law became so revered as to be regarded of equal value with the "thorah," and to have been given by Jehovah to Moses at the same time. Such an extreme notion, of course, raised the men who were its guardians and expounders into high importance; "the fear of the master" was to be as the "fear of heaven"; and to dispute with a rabbi was to argue with Jehovah himself. For centuries the ever-growing mass of oral law was preserved in the memories of these scribes, or masters, or rabbis; and it was not till above a century after the final overthrow of the Jewish state that the huge body of laws and legends was gathered into the "Talmud."³ This enormous book is known only to a learned few, and it is from their writings upon it that we have culled here and there a blossom of wise counsel, parable, or story which they have found growing in the tangled wilderness of its grotesque legends, trivial talk, and maudlinings over superstitions dead or dying.

The humblest Jew might rise to a place among the "Masters of the Law," and it is to the credit of this class that they were not paid as teachers, but lived

¹ Neh. iv. 18.

² Ib. ch. viii., *passim*.

³ "Be deliberate in judgment; raise up many disciples; and make a fence (or hedge) to the Thorah." *Pirke Aboth* (or *Sayings of the Fathers*), ch. i. 1. Edit. Rev. C. Taylor. Cambridge University Press.

⁴ Cf. Deutsch's *Lit. Remains*, Art. "Talmud," p. 14.

¹ *P. Aboth*, p. 27.

² Ib., v. 32.
³ See Appendix, Note C.

by some handicraft. Many of the greatest rabbis followed such trades as carpenters, tentmakers, weavers; and in the Talmud we find an exalted place given to work. Its union with piety is taught in the following story: "One day a sage walking through a crowded market-place met the prophet Elijah, and asked him who out of the multitude there would be saved. Elijah first pointed to a turnkey who was merciful to his prisoners, and next to two common-looking working men. The sage, meeting them, asked what were their saving works, and they, greatly puzzled, could only say: 'We are but poor workmen who live by our trade. When we meet anybody who seems sad we join him, and we talk to him, and cheer him, so that he forgets his grief. And if we know of two people who have quarrelled we talk to them, and persuade them until we have made them friends again. This is our whole life!'" Among the parables, so favourite a mode of instruction in the East, we have these on "death" and "dependence on God."

"Man is born with his hands clenched; he dies with them wide open. Entering life, he desires to grasp everything, leaving the world, all that he possessed slips away. Even as a fox is a man; as a fox which seeing a fine vineyard lusted after its grapes. But he was too fat to creep between the narrow palms, and so after three days' fasting became thin enough to get through. Having then feasted on the grapes, he again grew fat, and could not get out until he had fasted three days more. So with man: poor and naked he enters the world, poor and naked he leaves it."

"The scholars of Rabbi Simon ben Jochai once asked him: 'Why did not Jehovah give to Israel enough manna to suffice them for a year at one time, instead of meting it out daily?' The rabbi replied: 'I will answer ye with a parable. There was once a king who had a son to whom he gave a certain sum once a year. It so happened that the day on which this allowance was due was the only day in the year when the

father saw his son. So he changed his plan, and gave his son each day his allowance for that day only, and then the son visited his father every morning. So was it with Israel: each father, being dependent upon the manna sent by Jehovah every day for the support of his family, had his mind thereby directed to the Great Giver."

The three pillars that sustain the world are "the law, worship, and the bestowal of kindnesses."¹ The law begins, and ends in charity, as it is written, "And the Lord God made unto Adam and to his wife coats of skin and clothed them,"² and in the account of the death of Moses, "And he buried him."³ Meekness we learn from God himself, for "he chose Mount Sinai from which to give his commandments because it is the lowliest of the mountains, to show that his spirit rests only upon the meek and lowly. He called to Moses not from a lofty tree, but from a lowly bush. When he spoke to Elijah, he came not in the wind or the lightning or the earthquake, but in the 'still small voice,'"⁴ Six hundred and thirteen commandments were spoken to Moses 365, according to the number of days in the year, and 248 answering to the parts of the human body.⁵ These David, in the Psalms (xv. 2-5), reduced to eleven, Isaiah (xxviii. 15) rests them on six, Micah (vi. 8) on three, and Habakkuk on one (ii. 4), "The just shall live by his faith."

Here are a few of the wise proverbs and counsels that glitter amid pages of dullness:

"Say little and do much."

"Not learning but doing is the ground-work."
"Say not, when I have leisure I will study, perchance thou mayest not have leisure."

"The day is short, and the task is great; the workmen are sluggish, though the reward is great, and the Master of the house is urgent; is not imminent on thee to complete the work, but thou must not therefore cease from it."

¹ *P. Aboth*, v. 2.

² Gen. iii.

³ *Deut.* xxxiv. 6.

⁴ *Edersheim's Jewish Nation*, p. 380.

"Who is wise? He that learns from every man, for it is said, 'From all my teachers I get understanding.'"

"Who is mighty? He that subdues his nature; for it is said, 'He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.'"

"Who is rich? He that is contented with his lot; for it is said, 'When thou eatest the labour of thy hands, happy art thou, and it shall be well with thee.'"

"Despise not any man, and carp not at any thing, for thou wilt find that there is not a man that has not his hour, and not a thing that has not its place."

"He who learns as a lad, to what is he like? To ink written on fresh paper; and he who learns when old, to what is he like? To ink written on used paper."

"Regard not the first, but what is therein."

"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he standeth."

"When the righteous dies it is the earth that loses."

"Repent one day before thy death."

"There are three crowns" of the law, the priesthood, the kingship; but the crown of a good name is greater than them all."

In another place the same idea occurs: "The law has grown to be a wide sea, but it will some day shrink into this one command, Walk before God and be holy."

Among the foolish comments on the Jewish Scriptures, Adam is said to have been created with two faces, as it is written, "Thou hast beset me behind and before." When Esau embraced Jacob, the neck of the latter became marble; the haunchbone of Og was three miles in extent, and his teeth grew so long that they were entangled in the rocks, so the Psalmist says, "Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly"; gems fell from heaven with the manna; whatever a man wished for, that he had, as it is written, "Thou hast lacked nothing"; good angels are created daily, as it says, "They are new every morning." Of the twelve hours of the day, the Holy One, blessed be he, sits during the last three and amuses himself with Leviathan, as it is written, "The Leviathan whom thou hast made to play therein."

"Not the place honours the man, but the man the place."

"The reward of good works is like dates, sweet and ripening late."

"The best preacher is the heart; the best teacher is time; the best book is the world; the best friend is God."

To return to our story. Nehemiah left Jerusalem for a time, and on a second visit found that the reforms which he and Ezra had brought about with such fair promise had failed. The law was neglected, all manner of work was done on the Sabbath, the gifts to the temple had fallen off, and the priests had ceased to perform their duties. The zealous anger of Nehemiah were aroused; he stopped the Sabbath trading, levied a general tax for the temple service, and summoned the priests and Levites to return to the sanctuary. The people, as of old, had married foreign women, and among the offenders was a grandson of the high-priest, who, refusing to put away his wife, departed with her to her own country, Samaria. With the permission of the Persian king, he built a temple on Mount Gerizim, founded a priesthood there, and claimed that it and not Mount Moriah was the place where "men ought to worship." This act and the refusal of the Samaritans to acknowledge as sacred any other book than the "thorah" in which were the stories of the patriarchs, whose relies, the well of Jacob, the grave of Joseph, and the oaks under which Abraham sacrificed, were around them, widened still more the breach between them and the Jews.

For under the rule of Nehemiah a second batch of books, known under the common term of the "prophets," was added to the Hebrew Scriptures. According to the book of Maccabees, "he, founding a library, gathered together the acts of the kings, and the prophets, and of David, and the epistles of the kings concerning the holy gifts."

This verse is commonly explained as follows:—The letters from foreign kings related to the gifts which they had made

to the temple; the things concerning the "kings" are the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, these last two being treated as one by the Jews; the "prophets" are the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets, these last making up one book in the Jewish Scriptures. "The acts of David" are certain psalms which tradition ascribed to him, but these formed part of later additions to those scriptures.

Reference was made at p. 10 to man's avoidance of uttering the names of his deities, and it is about this time that we find the practice spreading among the Jews of using another word for Jehovah, the most frequent being "Adonai"—that is, "Lord" or "Master." They did this in obedience to a supposed command in the "thond" (Lav. xxiv. 16), rendering the word translated in our version "blaspheme" by the phrase, "pronounce distinctly." Their traditions say that "Jehovah" was uttered but once a year by the high priest, on the Day of Atonement, when he entered the "holy of holies," and that it was spoken for the last time by Simon the Just. Hence the says the Talmud, he who attempts to pronounce it shall have no part in the world to come.

The law was now once more supreme, and although the scribes, doctors, and expounders, were slowly perishing, the priests, whose duty was ministering and carrying out its decrees, both classes were one in the zeal with which they urged its commands on the people. And these responded with a gladness due to that which, interwoven with their history, awakened their interest, and formed a bond of unity, while the splendour of the temple service, and the feasts which ever and anon brought them from far and near, kindled their love for the shrine where Jehovah was believed to dwell. Under the mild rule of Persia, which left them unmolested so long as their tribute was paid, they increased in wealth and content. The real power was in the hands of the high

priest, and the people, freed from the unrest which attended struggles for kingship, pursued their way in peace, finding in their religion a joy and strength which manifests itself in the Psalms and other writings of that quiet time.

Their history ends in the Old Testament with the death of Nehemiah, and for upwards of two hundred and thirty years after that event our information of the scantiest kind, although the little that is known is of much value for understanding how changes were wrought in the thought and life of the nation.

When in its turn the Persian empire, into whose grip Egypt had come, fell before the arms of Alexander the Great, the Jews, after a slight show of resistance, passed to the dominion of the Greeks. The change made but a small difference in their condition, but it profoundly touched their beliefs, as spite all the more strict observance of the law to which they had been accustomed. Alexander had broken down the remaining barriers between East and West. Greek towns fringed the coast of Palestine, and were settled about Jerusalem, and the walls of Jerusalem gave power over to keep out Greek customs and ideas, which spread quickly. Numbers of Jews were carried to the new-founded city called Alexandria, where, on the decree of art and culture in Greece, because, under the hand and human Pitomy, to whose state Egypt had fallen on the death of Alexander, the chief seat of learning and centre of its diffusion, over the world. The Jewish settlers there numbered one third of the population, and enjoyed equal rights with the Greeks and Egyptians. It is not possible for them to live in such surroundings, the result of a race dwelling apart from others and finding no place for their natural and spiritual development, among them willing disciples, learning and sciences of their neighbours, and adopting even the Greek language, into ways of thinking which afterwards to greatly affect their thoughts about Jesus. It was at Alex-

the "thorn," and afterwards the entire Jewish scriptures, were translated, with certain alterations, into Greek, for the use of the Egyptian Jews. This version is known as the "Septuagint"; and, although the stricter Jews in Palestine looked on such a work as profane, and

even observed the day of its completion as a day of fasting, its use was so extended that nearly all the quotations from the Old Testament which are given in the writings comprising the New Testament are taken from it.

V.—THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

THE long years of quiet under the rule of the Persians and the Greeks were followed by stormy times, which reached the height of their fury in the reign of the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes, or "the Brilliant," surnamed from his freaks, both terrible and comic, Epiphanes, or "the Madman." On the faith of a report that he was dead the Jews revolted and imprisoned the high-priest, a creature who had bought the place which he held. When Antiochus heard of the outbreak, he was not sorry for the pretext which it gave him to punish the Jews and enforce his designs upon them. Twice was Jerusalem given over to the fury of his soldiers, "who smote it very sore and destroyed much people of Israel," and in the end he issued a decree commanding all his subjects to worship the gods of Greece alone. Some complied; the temple on Mount Gerizim was, with the consent of the Samaritans, dedicated to Jupiter, but the opposition of the faithful Jews brought on them a bitter persecution. The temple at Jerusalem was made a shrine of Jupiter Olympius; a sow was sacrificed on the altar, and broth prepared from its flesh sprinkled over the holy place and on copies of the law. The synagogues were destroyed, the keeping of the Sabbath forbidden, and the Jews who refused to

yield were put to cruel torture and lingering deaths.

Had Antiochus left their religion alone, it would, as in the past, have quietly imbibed the ideas floating around it; but his efforts to uproot it gave rise to a movement which planted it the more firmly, so that in after-time it put forth the native flower of the religion of Jesus. For at this crisis an aged priest, named Mattathias, who with his five sons had withdrawn to the village of Modin, had, in slaying at the idol altar an apostate Jew, kindled a spark which set the whole land ablaze. Mattathias lived only a short while after this; but the number of gallant and faithful men who flocked around him were already a little army, and they found the needed leader in his chosen son, Judas Maccabeus, a brave and withal gentle man, "so that he was renowned unto the utmost parts of the earth, and received unto him such as were ready to perish."¹ He won nearly every battle, and at last retook Jerusalem, cleansed the temple, cleared the courts, where "the shrubs grew as in a forest,"² built a new altar,

¹ This name, commonly translated the "Hammerer," is of uncertain meaning, but is believed to have been a title of Judas himself, like "Martel," the surname of Charles of France. An admirable life of him, by Lieutenant Conder, is published in the "New Plutarch" series.

² Macc. iii. 9.

³ Id. iv. 38.

and "sacrificed the sacrifice of deliverance and praise." He died fighting against overwhelming numbers of the Syrians, and was succeeded by his brothers Jonathan and Simon, under whom the complete freedom of the nation was secured. John Hyrcanus, son of Simon, greatly extended the kingdom; Galilee, Samaria, the lands of Edom and beyond Jordan were subdued, and, crowning triumph for the Jews, the rival temple on Gerizim, which had been an offence to them for 200 years, was razed to the ground.

So for a brief space it seemed as if the visions of the prophets had come to pass and the former days returned; for the Jews were their own masters, subject only to the law of Moses as expanded and expounded by the scribes, paying no tribute, and, among other tokens of independence and increase of wealth, giving cheerfully the temple tax in coin bearing the inscription of the high priest.

Although each had its rise at an earlier time, it is during the Maccabean period that mention is first made of two great schools or parties among the Jews—namely, the Pharisees and Sadducees, of whom some account will more fitly follow in speaking of the relations between them and Jesus.

Save in a few misleading words from Tacitus,¹ we look in vain for any reference to the heroic struggle, with its brilliant but short-lived success, in any Greek or Roman writer; and indeed the most celebrated among these last exhibit such ignorance about the Jews and such contempt for them as to render valueless the little that they say concerning them.

The history of the Maccabean time survives in Jewish writings alone, and of these the most important are not included in the Old Testament. In some of the Psalms, as the seventy-fourth and seventy-

¹ "Antiochus strove to free the Jews from their superstitions and give them Greek manners, but was prevented by the Parthian war from reforming this hateful people."—*History*, v. 5, 9.

ninth, we hear the cry of anguish wrung from the tortured people; but it is in the "books of the Maccabees" that the story is given in detail, and this with a beauty and simple pathos which causes us to marvel at the mental blindness of the men who, in admitting such writings as the "Book of Esther" and the "Song of Solomon," accorded no place to these. The "Book of Daniel" (in which the author, following a not uncommon practice of the past of speaking in the name of some man of note, uses that of a Jewish "seer" of rank, who lived in Babylon during the Exile) gives us insight into the desires that filled the faithful, and it seems to have been a favourite study then, as since, because it appeared "not only to unfold the future, as the other prophets, but to give the exact time when events would occur."² The sad state of the nation, as forcibly described in the opening chapter of the "First Book of Maccabees," had rekindled in nobler minds not all-forgetful of the past the Messianic hopes of old, and amid the legends and visions of the "Book of Daniel" there are sober attempts to find in the events of the time the signs of near fulfilment of old foretellings. Antiochus will be punished as Nebuchadrezzar had been; the kingdom of the Greeks should fall as that of the Chaldees and others had fallen; and the pious who had died for the faith would rise again into everlasting life.³ For it is now that the Jewish belief in an after state of the good and bad makes a distinct advance, impelled by men's efforts to find an answer to the perplexing question: What reward shall be theirs whose life here has been one of suffering and their death one of martyrdom for Israel's God and law?—an answer given thus in the Book of Daniel: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life";³ and in a later book of exceeding beauty: "The souls of the righteous are in the hands of the

¹ Josephus, *Antiq.* x. 11, 7.

² 2 Macc. vii. 9, 29. ³ Dan. xii.

.....in the sight of the unwise they seemed to die, but they are in peacethey shall judge the nations and have dominion over the people.”¹

The shades of the dead which reposed in “sheol” would, it was said, rise at a judgment day, to be ushered in by dreadful signs, when God, the “Ancient of Days,” seated on his throne, would deliver power into the hands of the “son of man,” by whom, like the suffering “servant of Jehovah,” the pious in Israel are meant. These should exercise lordship over the earth, the chief city of which would be a “new Jerusalem,” while the wicked, awaking to “shame and everlasting contempt,” would be hurled into hell, a place of punishment, figured by the valley of Hinnom or “Gehenna,” near Jerusalem, where sacrifices were once offered to Molech, and into which were cast the offal of the city and the bodies of beasts and executed criminals, fires being kept burning to prevent pestilence from the putrid remains inbreeding preying worms.² How current these notions were in Palestine in after-time is shown in the Talmud, and in the teaching of Jesus concerning eternal bliss and never-ending torment which has been embodied in the creed of millions of Christians concerning an hereafter.

The same chapter in the second book of Maccabees which speaks of Nehemiah’s “library” tells us that “in like manner, also, Judas gathered together all those things that were lost by reason of the war,”³ by which is understood the *third* portion of the Hebrew scriptures—namely, the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, the Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles—known to the Jews under the common term of the “writings.” Very different opinions, however, prevailed for some centuries as to which should be admitted in this division; but at last all the books which now comprise

the Old Testament were held to be of equal authority, and were accepted as divine alike by Jews and Christians.⁴

From the time of Ezra the work of the “men of the great synagogue” had been carried on by pious and learned Jews, the last of whom was the high priest, Simon the Just. Their work must, in any case, have come to a standstill during the dark days when Antiochus ruled, and it is in the reign of John Hyrcanus that we find a “house of judgment” existing, to which the name “Sanhedrin” was given. This supreme court of the Jews, which was composed of priests, elders, and the more learned among the rabbis, about seventy-one members in all, dealt with matters of public worship—the fixing of sacred times and seasons, especially that of the new moon—as well as with all offences against the law, for which in very rare cases it passed sentence of death, although under the Roman rule it had no power to carry out that penalty.

As partly explaining the presence of the Romans in Palestine, we are told, in the first book of Maccabees, that Judas Maccabeus had heard of their fame. “That they were mighty and valiant men, and as such would lovingly accept all that joined themselves unto them, and that they were men of great valour.” It was told him also of their wars and noble acts “that they had conquered kingdoms both far and nigh, insomuch as all that heard of their name were afraid of them.....yet for all this none of them wore a crown or was clothed in purple. Moreover, how they had made for themselves a senate-house wherein 320 men sat in council daily consulting alway for the people, to the end they might be well ordered, and that they committed their government to one man every year who ruled over all their country, and that all were obedient to that one, and that there was neither envy nor emulation among them.”⁵

¹ Wisdom of Solomon iii. 1, 2, 3, 8.

² Isa. lxvi. 24; Mark ix. 44, 46.

³ Ch. ii. 14.

⁴ See Appendix, note D.

⁵ 1 Macc. viii. 1, 2, 12-16.

With these Judas made an alliance, which, however, was to prove fatal to the independence of his people. For the price of Roman protection was submission, and a few years after the death of John Hyrcanus the bloody contests which arose between the Jewish princes for the supreme power gave the Romans a pretext to interpose.

When their famous general, Pompey, was on his conquering march in Syria, each of the two rivals sought his support, and one of them, Aristobulus, fearing an adverse judgment, prepared to fight. He fell back on Jerusalem, whose gates the followers of his opponent threw open at the approach of the Romans. But his supporters betook themselves to the temple fortress, and there sustained a siege for three months, when the stronghold was taken, and its capture followed by great slaughter. The priests were slain at the altar, the temple was profaned; Pompey, to the horror of the Jews, entered the sacred building, and even drew aside the veil that hung before the "holy of holies," finding, to his surprise, no image or symbol of the god of the Jews. Aristobulus, with a crowd of other captive princes, was made to grace the triumph of the victor on his entry into Rome, and the doom of the Jews as a subject-people was sealed. Judas had courted the friendship of Rome, and her grasp was as of iron. By her aid a hated stranger, Herod, surnamed "the Great," was, after varying fortunes, made king of the Jews, and it was in the latter part of his reign, probably five years before our computed era, that Jesus of Nazareth was born.

Although very much of detail has been left out in this sketch of Jewish history, so that the more important events might appear in clearer outline, the picture may yet seem confused and overcrowded, and it will be helpful if, before passing to the next part of this book, there is gathered into a few words the substance of what has been said.

The forefathers of the Jews were rude, nature-worshipping shepherd tribes, who,

after many wanderings over Syria, settled in Goshen, where the Pharaohs oppressed them. The credit of their deliverance lies with Moses, who gave them a code binding them to the service of Jehovah, the god whom he praised for their escape. They resumed their nomad life for some years, and then invaded the land of Canaan, which they gradually conquered, advancing in part to a settled state as tillers of the soil, and worshipping the gods of the country side by side with Jehovah. For a long time they were ruled by chieftains or "judges," the most noted of whom, as the founder of schools of the prophets, giving rise to a class of men unique in history, was Samuel. But the influence of these "judges" was fitful and limited over such half-barbarous tribes, harassed by foes among and around them, and it was not until the adoption of the kingly form of government that unity was secured. The advance then made was rapid: in the reign of David a capital and chief seat of Jehovah-worship was founded, and the kingdom extended to the Euphrates; in that of Solomon the nation reached the height of its outward glory. But oppression and waste bred discontent, and on his death a rebellion broke out which rent the kingdom asunder; ten of the tribes forming the kingdom of Ephraim or Israel, and the remaining two the kingdom of Judah.

Contests for the throne and struggles between the religion of the Canaanites and the Israelites kept the larger kingdom in constant unquiet, and the one bright spot in its overcast existence is the witness of the prophet-reformers, who, in ever-advancing loftiness of belief, insisted on faithfulness to Jehovah and holiness of life as the conditions of well-being. But the fate of neighbouring nations last befel the weakened Israelites; the Assyrians conquered them and carried away captive the cream of the people, leaving a remnant who, mingling with settlers from their empire, formed the Samaritan race.

Judah had a longer and less trou-

career, but the same elements of strife about the gods were present, shrines and images abounding, and the rulers foolishly mixed in the wars between the great rival empires on either side, so that in the end the country was conquered by the stronger power, the capital and shrine burnt, and the upper classes carried to Babylon.

The great dividing line in Jewish history, which from the fall of Israel centres in Judaea, is the Exile; for the changes, whatever their cause, which which were brought about by that event, were marked and momentous in their bearing on the future of the captives. Deprived of temple and altar, thought was turned to the past; the law of Jehovah and the words of his prophets, of whom well-nigh the last and noblest, proclaiming him the only true god, had spoken, were deeply studied; the one took into itself new and abiding elements¹ from Chaldea, and the other fed hope in deliverance and in a return of the ancient glory.

On the fall of Babylon, the exiles received permission from its captor, Cyrus, king of Persia, to return to their fatherland, and a goodly number availed themselves of this kindly act, bestirring

¹ "Many voices were blended there; unknown voices, speaking out of the early dawn."—*God and the Bible*, p. 185.

themselves on their arrival to repeople the waste cities and rebuild the temple. Progress, however, was slow, until a zealous scribe named Ezra stirred the laggards to active obedience to the law of Jehovah, which he recast and enlarged, and the explanation of which gave rise to a huge mass of oral rules and comments, the work of scribes and rabbis, which ceased not for a thousand years. The entire policy of Ezra and of the governor Nehemiah was the erection of a priestly state, in which the law of Jehovah was supreme, the simple but more sublime teaching of the prophets falling more and more into the background.

Under the rule of Persia, and afterward of Greece, the Jews had peace; but the savage persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, designed to stamp out their religion, led to a bloody war, in which the gallant resistance of the Maccabees was successful and the freedom of the nation secured. The influence of Greek thought on the Jewish religion was thus checked, and the distinctive features of the latter more strongly marked than ever; but the independence of the race was brief, for internal quarrels gave the Romans an excuse to interfere in its affairs. They acquired a hated mastery over it by placing upon the throne the brave and able, but cruel, Herod the Great, in whose reign Jesus of Nazareth was born.

PART II.

JESUS OF NAZARETH

I.—INTRODUCTORY

THE land of Palestine, over which history follows the tread of each great empire of the East in its turn, was divided, at the time of the Roman rule, into the provinces of Galilee, Samaria, and Judæa.

In the sketch of its features given on page 24 the more favoured parts were described as lying to the north, and the histories of the time we have reached witness to their fertility and beauty. The rabbis, in their fanciful way, said that in Galilee men "waded in oil," and that it was "easier to rear a forest of olive trees there than one child in Judæa." From the historic heights, crowned with Jewish villages and farmsteads, the eye rested on a garden-like land of dales and hills, on towns built both in the Greek and Roman style, on the gleaming sea dotted with the sails of the "ships of Tarshish," on the sandy coast along which ran one of the busy highways of trade, the "via maris" or "sea road"; and, among other ports, on ancient Tyre, famous for its glass and dye works, while inland was the lake of Tiberias, covered with boats catching the fish with which it swarmed.

Galilee, from "gall," a "circle," was the name formerly given to a small part of Palestine occupied by strangers; but at the Roman period it was applied to the province now described, for not

only were there remnants of the older Canaanites (still, so M. Ganneau affirms, surviving in the fellahin, or peasants) scattered among the Jews, but a large population of Phoenician, Syrian, Arab, Greek, and other settlers.

The intercourse which could not fail to arise between these and the "chosen" people enlarged the ideas of the latter and freed them from that narrowness which their traditions fostered. But their separation from the sacred city and temple deepened rather than lessened devotion to their faith and eagerness to defend it unto death. "Cowardice was never their failing," Josephus tells us, and they who had given to Israel in the past many prophets and patriots, whose frontier land, bearing the brunt of attacks, had called forth their courage and made them brave defenders, were the more frequent rebels against the Romans, and the ringleaders in the tumults which arose at the great festivals in Jerusalem, which they failed not to attend. The stricter brethren of the south, however, of untainted descent and a purer character, laughed and scoffed at their bold manners and the rustic brogue by which they were at once known;² but their

¹ Cf. *Palæst. Explor. Fund Quarterly*, Sept. 1875. ² *Unknown Palæstine*, pp. 9-10.
³ Matt. xxvi. 73.

ignorance of the nicer subtleties of the law was well atoned for by a wider knowledge of "the best book, the world," and their surroundings nourished a piety of more manly type.

Between Galilee and Judæa lay the country of the detested Samaritans, or Cutheans, as the Jews called them, from Cuthah, whence many of them were brought by the Assyrian king.¹ The causes which led to bitter hatred between the two races have been stated, and the bad feeling was increased under the Romans, whose conquest the Samaritans welcomed for the gain it brought them in trade, and for the revenge which it seemed to them, as they looked on their ruined temple, to inflict on the Jews. To these a Samaritan was more hateful than a heathen, for a Gentile might be a friend, and of such an one there was hope, but of a Cuthean, never: "He who takes bread of him is like unto him who eats swine's flesh." And the hatred was reciprocated. The Samaritans did their best to annoy the Jews, confusing their moon-signals; even defiling, it is said, their temple-courts with dead men's bones; and plotting to murder them as they passed on their way to the feasts. To avoid the "Cuthite strip," as the Talmud called it, the Galileans took a roundabout route to Jerusalem, and would often on their return, with hatred inflamed by excitement, attack the Samaritans and think they did Jehovah service by spilling their blood.

The interest awakened by Judæa centres in Jerusalem, city of the "Great King," the home of the priesthood and rival parties, the headquarters of Rabbinism and all else that, wilfully shutting out light from the world around, made Jewish life unlovely as the Judæan landscape, and stunted as the desert shrubs. But any account of this and of its renowned temple will more fitly follow in connection with the public life of Jesus; here it is of greater moment to

learn what was the general feeling among the Jews on the loss of their independence.

The conquests of the Romans, by which they had gained mastery over the world from the Atlantic to the Euphrates, and from the Rhine and Danube to the deserts of Africa, were not unmixed with good, for the advance of races was quickened in many ways by their being brought under one powerful rule.

But the matchless skill of the iron-handed victors in fusing their subject-peoples one with another was sorely tested in dealing with so unique a race as the Jews. For their traditions and religion, deep-rooted in the past, were, as we have seen, fed by this one idea, that Jehovah had chosen them and set them apart from the rest of mankind; that he was their only King, and the fulfilling of his laws their sole duty; therefore, that no foreign power had title to rule over them or impose its laws on them, still less to gather taxes from the land, the produce of which was tithed for the support of the worship of its invisible Owner. Here was a people who would rather die than fight on a Sabbath, or than eat food which they regarded as unclean; who shrank from the touch of Gentiles, would not buy of them or let houses or fields to them, and permitted no man to be a priest whose mother had been captive among them, and who had thus cast doubt on the pure descent of her children.

Added to the dislike which every nation feels towards its conquerors, it was to the Jew a desecration that the land which Jehovah had given his fathers, a land whose praises the rabbis never tired of chanting—the centre of the earth¹—whose very air made men wise and immortal, should be trodden by the Gentiles; an impious thing that he should be called upon to pay divine honours to the Roman Emperor, whose

¹ 2 Kings xviii. 24.

¹ There is a circle of marble and a short column under the dome of the Greek church at Jerusalem to mark the spot.

soldiers planted their standards beside the temple, and, most horrible, had peered into its innermost shrine, since which awful day, so said the rabbis, flowers had lost their perfume and fruits their flavour!

The bitter feeling was deepened when there was set over them a man of the race of Edom (or "sons of Esau"), a friend, too, of the Cutheans. Herod "the Great" was brave, able, and cultured; his reign was one of outward splendour; the country had peace under him; he cleared the hills of robber-gangs, made the highways secure, and left proof of his enterprise and taste in many great public works, while to win the favour of the Jews he replaced the second temple, a mean-looking building, by a costly and splendid structure, and in time of distress parted with his gold and silver plate to buy food and clothing for the people. But his good deeds were marred by crafty and cruel ones. He angered the Jews by setting up an eagle, symbol of the Roman power, whose creature he was, over the chief gate of the temple, and by building theatres and places for public games in the holy city, as well as temples to his master and shrines to the gods of Greece in different parts. In his fits of savage rage this hot-blooded Eastern spared not his nearest and dearest, and at the close of his life, when, a hated and dreaded old man, he was stricken with a loathsome disease, he is said to have ordered the murder of certain nobles, that thus there might not fail mourning at his death; but the command was not obeyed. The Jews sent to Rome to entreat that none of his house might succeed him, and that they might live according to their own law under the governor of Syria. But their prayer was refused, and after tumult and bloodshed the kingdom was divided among Herod's three sons; Archelaus being placed over Judea and Samaria, Herod Antipas over Galilee, and Philip over the country beyond Jordan. Six years after this Archelaus was banished on account of his many

crimes, and his territory added to the province of Syria, thus coming under the direct rule of a Roman governor, whose seat was at Cæsarea.

The darker the night, the brighter flashed the hope of the Jews in the advent of a Messiah. How steadfast it was is illustrated in the touching parable from the Talmud of a man who, having betrothed himself to a beautiful maiden, went away. The girl waited and waited, but he did not return, and her friends and rivals mocked her, saying: "He will never come." Then, weeping, yet not despairing, she would go into her room and read over and over again the letters in which he had promised to be ever faithful, and was comforted. At last he came back, and, asking her how she had kept her trust without faltering, she showed him his letters. So Israel, in exile and in bondage, was mocked by the nations; but she went into her schools and synagogues, and took out the ancient writings in which Jehovah had spoken through the seers and prophets, and was cheered. He would in time redeem it and say: "How could you alone among all the mocking nations be faithful?" And she would point to the sacred books and answer: "Had I not your promise there?"

The book of Daniel and writings which it had inspired were eagerly studied; and while it is not easy to gather from the tangled visions of "seers" the actual form in which it was believed the deliverer would come, it suffices to say here that the feeling abroad was that he might appear at any time to "restore the kingdom to Israel," and, as the ancient foes had been overthrown, overthrow this last and terrible fourth beast, "exceeding dreadful," "that had power over the world through great fearfulness,"¹ the empire of Rome. This hope and the flying rumour of violations of the law by Roman and Greeks kept all classes at fever heat, arousing a more extreme section, ² who

¹ Dan. vii. 19.

² Esdras xi.

as "Zealots," to fruitless revolts, in which, altogether, many thousands were slain. And, indeed, so widespread was the expectation that writers outside Palestine, who gave small heed to its concerns, speak of the "ancient and firm faith of a people who take their origin from Judæa, that they would become the masters of the whole world,"¹ while the general state of the empire, then one of profound peace, yet of many unhealed wounds, afforded that resting-time in which men may pause to think of the future and give heed to the course which events threaten to take.

Now, the Romans, who had many great and fine qualities, were not the people to calmly brook the scorn and hatred of a conquered race, and we cannot wonder that they regarded its notions about its chosen place and destiny as crazy nonsense, to be treated with contempt unless it threatened mischief, when it was to be crushed by force. The wits in Rome, whither Jewish slaves had been brought, made merry over their belief in an imageless god, their refusal to eat pork, or to work on the Sabbath, repeated shameless fables about them, and accounted for their holding aloof from the Gentiles as arising from a terrible oath to hate all men. Even sober writers, taking no pains to acquaint themselves with the beliefs and history of the Jews, did injustice to the sterling virtues of that mistaken but remarkable race, the famous Tacitus speaking of them as not inclined to religion because they disdained the Roman gods, as, in after time, the early Christians were for a like reason called "Atheists," (from Greek *a*, without, and *theos*, God).

The maddening irritation aroused among the Jews through the taxes imposed by Rome was increased by the merciless way in which they were collected. To prevent loss or fraud the central power sold the revenues of a province for a

fixed sum of money, and the buyers made as much as they could out of the bargain by extorting the utmost from the unhappy people, stripping them bare, and goading them again and again to become bandits or rebels.²

Such, in brief outline, were the relations between the Jews and their masters at the time when Jesus was born at Nazareth, a mountain village of Galilee. His name, a Greek form of the Hebrew "Joshua" or "Jeshua," meaning "deliverer" or "preserver," was not an uncommon one among the Jews. In the works of their great historian, Josephus, we read of fourteen men, more or less noted, who had borne it; and in the most ancient copies of the lives of Jesus it occurred as a first name of Bar-Abbas ("son of Abbas"), a celebrated rebel of his time; but it was afterwards left out because it was thought a dis-honour to Jesus of Nazareth that his name should be worn by a man deemed unworthy.

The exact year when Jesus was born is uncertain. Following an old practice among nations in reckoning time from some striking event in their history—as, for example, the Romans from the building of their city, the Greeks from the revival of their public games, and the Mohammedans from the flight of their prophet from Mecca—Christians reckon time from the birth of Jesus, the date of which was fixed by a monk named Dionysius, who lived about thirteen hundred years ago. But he was wrong in his figures, because it is certain that Jesus was born before the death of Herod the Great, which took place 750 years after the foundation of Rome, or four years before the Christian era begins.

Therefore, all that can be said with sureness is that Jesus was born somewhere near the Roman year 750 A.U.C.,³ in the reign of Caesar Augustus.

¹ "Wherever the 'publican' penetrates, there is no more justice or liberty for anyone."—Livy, xlv. 18.

² *Ab urbe conditâ*, "from the founding of the city."

³ Tacitus, *Hist.* v. 13.

It is worth while learning how the 25th of December was fixed on as his birthday, because it is an example of one of the many proofs which history supplies of the mingling of pagan rites and customs with the Christian religion.

In the Roman calendar that day was the day of the winter "solstice"; that is, when the sun, reaching its apparent furthest point from the equator, seems to "stand still," and then to turn back wheel-like in its path through the heavens. When, with the entrance of the Oriental religions, the worship of Mithra,¹ one of the Vedic gods, spread from the East into Rome, this day became dedicated to him as the "birthday of the unconquered sun," and was ushered in with feasting. For men rejoiced when the turning-point of the year was reached, and when nature, awaking from her winter sleep, doffed her sombre dress and put on the fresh green robe of springtime, decked with early flowers in witness of renewed life. These combined to make the season celebrated; and at last, about A.D. 273, the Roman Christians gave to the birthday of Mithra a fuller and richer meaning in fixing upon it as the birthday of him in whom they believed as the "Light of the World." It was a happy and beautiful thought, on which they loved to dwell; and when their missionaries went forth to convert the tribes of Northern Europe they found it easy to impart such glad observance of the season, it being the merry "yule" time among those rude sun-worshippers. And in the blazing logs and ornamented trees and hanging sprigs of mistletoe—a sacred plant among them—there linger the customs of our forefathers, as in each rite and ceremony, as well as in the dogmas of the Christian

religion, there are traces of Egyptian, Greek, and still older influences.

Nazareth was an obscure place until the birth of Jesus made it famous, for it is not named in the Old Testament, neither in the Talmud, nor by Josephus. It lies on the slopes of steep and lofty hills which rise from the plains of Galilee; its houses, built of limestone quarried from the rocks on which they stand, bowered in vines, palms, and olive trees, make a bright picture, to which the richness of the surrounding country adds its charms—"a handful of pearls in a goblet of emeralds." From the breezy hilltops which overlook the town a view exceeding fair is commanded of green plains and fruitful valleys, wooded heights, and, beyond these, westward, the purple sea; northward, snow-capped Hermon; while all the land around is dotted with places famed in Jewish history and dear to pious hearts.

Changes come about so slowly in the East that, to the traveller in Palestine who knows the Bible well, the past stands before him, not only in the manners and customs of the people, but in the very phrases that fall from their lips; and, as he climbs the steep and winding path that leads him to the streets of Nazareth, it is not difficult to picture the scenes amid which Jesus played in his boyhood and toiled in his manhood. He was one of a large family of boys and girls, whose parents, Joseph and Mary, belonged to the working-class, the father being a carpenter.¹ Their home was, doubtless, like the homes of such humble folk at this day—a plain stone building, lighted solely by the doorway, its only furniture a painted chest or seat built along the wall, a stool on which the food is put and around which the household sit on crossed knees or on mats, while a few water-jars complete the scanty contents. Such a home among us would denote extreme poverty; so in Eastern villages, where that I fight for a crust which the toiler

¹ Mithra was developed in the ancient Persian religion into the Sun-god. His worship, with rites closely approximating to those of the Christian religion, spread in Britain as far as Northumberland. See chapters on the Mithraic cult in J. M. Robertson's *Pagan Christs* (1903), and in Prof. Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius* (1905).

¹ See Appendix, Note E.

crowded places have to wage, and that foolish and unresting craving after show and costly trifles, to which so many are slaves, are alike unknown, and where scarce a want is felt when once food and clothing, both costing but little, are supplied.

Among the chief buildings of Nazareth are a mosque, for the larger number of the people are Mohammedans, and a Roman Catholic monastery, which, it is pretended, stands on the site of Joseph's house, and in which is shown the "grotto" where, according to legend, an angel appeared to Mary to foretell the birth of Jesus. But the Greek church has a "grotto" which is also claimed as the genuine scene of that event! Perhaps among the true relics in the ancient town is a well called the "fountain of the Virgin," to which the women of Nazareth brought their water-jars to be filled, and around which we may picture them gossiping in the time of Jesus, as do the women there to this day.

When the slender materials from which our knowledge about Jesus is derived are stripped of their legends, there is scarcely anything left with which to form a picture of his boyhood. He has suffered the common fate of men of mark in the myths which have gathered round him, and his lot was cast in a time when every wonder-tale found ready believers. The fewer the facts, the greater was the space to be filled with legend; and whoever towered above his fellows was sure to be credited with superhuman powers, while the followers of such an one saw in these the means of adding to his fame. Thus it is that a number of "Apocryphal Gospels" arose which have been wisely cast aside as worthless, yet which possess interest as showing what childish tales about Jesus found a hearing in early Christian times. These tell how he tamed lions and panthers in Egypt, where the idols fell prostrate at his coming; how a dumb bride who kissed

him forthwith spoke and heard; how a girl and a prince were healed of leprosy by the water in which he had been washed; how a bandage from his body, made into a little shirt and worn by a child, saved it from burning in a blazing oven, and from drowning in a well; how the smell of his clothes raised a dead boy to life; how, when playing with other boys who were moulding clay beasts and birds, he made his images walk and leap; how he turned some of his playmates, when hiding from him, into goats; and how, entering a dyer's shop, he threw all the pieces of cloth into a vat of indigo, and then relieved the man's distress by bringing each piece dyed the exact colour he wanted.¹ In contrast to this drivel, we have the following and only story of his boyhood in the New Testament.

Every year crowds of Jewish pilgrims journeyed from all parts to Jerusalem in obedience to the law to keep the great feasts. Among those who went from Nazareth to observe the Passover were Joseph and Mary, taking Jesus with them. Having reached his twelfth year, he was on the eve of becoming a "son of the law"; for at the age of thirteen a youth was required to practise all its commandments.² On their return homeward his parents seem to have travelled some distance before they found that he was not with the caravan, and, after seeking for him in vain, they went back in sore distress. They scoured the city without success, and, as a forlorn hope, made their way to the temple, where, to their joy, they found him among the scholars, sitting round the teachers of the law in the "hall of hewn stones." He was not only listening intently to their debate over knotty matters, but taking part in it, giving such clear answers, and asking such puzzling questions in return, that "all who heard him were astonished at his understanding."

¹ See *Apocryphal Gospels*, translated by B. H. Cowper, *passim*.

² *P. Abot*, p. 111, addenda.

Such cases of ripeness of knowledge in early boyhood are by no means rare in the East, where both body and mind develop much quicker than with us. According to the "Apocryphal Gospels," he strikes the teachers and elders speechless, solves all questions in the law, makes clear the meaning of the prophets, and teaches astronomers and others the leading truths of their sciences, so that they fall worshipping at his feet; but in the "Gospel According to Luke" the story is more soberly concluded by his mother asking :

"Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."¹

These few closing words, with their faithful touch of his mother treasuring the sayings of her bright boy, comprise all that we are told about Jesus from his twelfth year till he had long passed manhood. For his name was obscure until he flashed into fame as a teacher, and the facts of his earlier life were unknown or matters of slight concern to his disciples. It was not till some time after his death that inquiry was set afoot about his origin, and then it was that the few facts at hand were made to yield to legends of his birth at Bethlehem, and of the wonders that attended it, by which it was vainly sought to prove that the foretellings of old concerning a Messiah were fulfilled in him. Therefore, the only means we have of knowing aught concerning his boyhood and training is in learning what we can about the education given to Jewish youths in Galilee in his time, adding to this what can be

gathered from current histories as to the circumstances surrounding him as shaping his character.

Both law and custom among the Jews made the instruction of their children a sacred duty. Among no other people has the family bond been so strong, and next to the command to honour Jehovah stood the command to honour father and mother. These saw in their children the gifts of God, for the childless wife was a reproach among her people and a sorrow to herself, since none knew from whom the Messiah might be born. The Old Testament gives us charming pictures of the influence of the mother in the training of her children; and the Talmud, despite many slighting remarks upon woman, says: "He is best taught who has first learned from his mother"; but the duty of instructing the child in the law was laid chiefly on the father. "Blessed," said the rabbis, "is the son who has studied with his father, and blessed is the father who has taught his son"; while Josephus boasts that "our honour and the highest end of life is the education of our children and the observance of the law."

"The world is saved by the breath of school-children" is one of the most beautiful sayings of the rabbis; but, although schools were founded in Palestine some eighty years before the birth of Jesus, they were confined to the larger towns, the schoolmaster in smaller places like Nazareth being the "reader" in the synagogue.

The poorest home was probably not without some roll or portion of the sacred books, and in every act of family life the precepts of the "law" were set before the children; but more care was taken to teach the knowledge of the Scriptures, concerning as they did history and religion, than was gained in the synagogue, which was laid down by the rabbis, a boy could attend as early as his fifth or sixth year, and hear them read and explained. Judging from the after career of the "law" had small charm for him, compared with the music of the

¹ Luke ii. 48 52.

and the brilliant visions of the prophets to which he was to give deeper meaning, while many of his discourses show that he was familiar with the book of Daniel and similar writings which then fed and fired the imagination, as well as with some of the more beautiful sayings of the rabbis.

Beyond these, and learning to read and write in his Aramaic mother-tongue, the book-knowledge of Jesus did not go. The rabbis said, since it was written of the law, "Thou shalt study it day and night," any other study could be carried on only when it was neither day nor night—that is, never. A curse was pronounced against the Jew who taught his children Greek, nor could he hope for eternal life who read the books of other nations, or taught the Gentiles to read the law. So the schooling of Jesus was of a scanty kind; he shared the common, and, to us in these later days, repellent, superstitions of the humble peasants among whom he lived; he grew up ignorant of the general state of the world, and of such progress as the more advanced nations had made in philosophy and science.

But he was not, therefore, badly educated, for nature and human kind, which are much the same all the world over, were his chief teachers. It was a gainful thing for the work which he was to do in the world, without which, indeed, it would not have been done, that his lot was cast amid the fair beauty and open surroundings of despised Galilee instead of amid the barred-in life of gloomy Judæa. For thus he could readily pass into the larger life of mankind, to whose struggles after unity he was to render momentous service. The lack of book-knowledge, by itself a cramping thing, left more room for storing within all that was brought by eye and ear; the wealth of parable and illustration drawn from the beautiful hills and bowery dales of Nazareth, and from the busy lives of men passing along the great highways at its feet, or following their calling, show how keen he was to observe—how, "look-

where he might, he saw in all things some new knowledge, some revelation, concerning the will of him whom he taught men to address as their Father in heaven."

Such were the conditions amid which Jesus grew up; but when we have learned all that we can about these, there will remain in him, as in the life of every great man, much that we cannot explain. If we knew *all*, we should know him, whereas we have but a shred of history about him from his birth till at least his thirtieth year; one somewhat doubtful story of his journey as a boy to Jerusalem, nothing more! Yet we must not say that to the extent to which we cannot understand him he is super-human, a demigod above the reach of knowledge, for that would be to fall into the error by which man once sought to explain whatever was outside the limits of the knowledge of his time, and, furthermore, would make all effort to be like Jesus beyond our power and fruitful of despair. It is not possible to detail within the limits of this book how science strives to explain the secret of the transmission of bodily and mental characters from forbears to offspring, so that every man is a son not only of his own time, but of all time that has gone before him; and how it accounts for the uprising, often amid commonplace surroundings, of some wondrous genius as the result of subtle, slow-working causes which at last receive the quickening touch producing such an one. We must study books dealing with the laws of the mysterious action of heredity for the understanding of a matter so important in its bearing on our conduct, and so potent in ridding the mind of the old notion concerning the great ones of our race, that "the gods have come down in the likeness of men."¹

No mention is made of Joseph after the story of the finding of Jesus in the

¹ Acts xiv. 11.

temple, and we may fairly conclude, apart from a statement in the "Apocryphal" history about him that he died when Jesus was nineteen years old,¹ that Mary was widowed somewhat early, and that the care of maintaining the household fell upon the sons. These, in accordance with Jewish custom, had been taught some handicraft, probably their father's; and it would appear that for some years Jesus, whether the eldest among them or not we cannot say, worked as a carpenter, and waited as a pious Jew for the kingdom of God. The event which called him from Nazareth, and but for which his life of toil and quiet thought might never have been disturbed, was the preaching of John the Baptist. News had reached Galilee of the appearance of a man altogether unlike the teachers of the day, and who seemed rather as one of the old prophets, the like of whom had not been heard for full four hundred years. Crowds were flocking to this man—no smooth-tongued preacher, but one whose words were as of fire, that, like Elijah's, "burned as a torch." He was clad in the prophet's dress of camel skin, fastened with a leather girdle, and had come from the wilderness near the Dead Sea, where he had lived on such food as that barren place yielded—honey from the wild flowers, and locusts dried in the sun, the fare of the poorest in the East—while his soul had fed itself with thoughts of God's presence and swift-avenging power, and been quickened into action by the story of Israel's past. Between him and the prophets, wide as was the gap in time, there was deep fellow-feeling, and he found in their unheeded words the truth to which his soul responded, and which he must perforce proclaim to his people.

When and where he was born, or who were his parents, we know not; but he was probably a native of Judæa, the unlovely land that nursed the loveless religion of

priests and rabbis. Against their irk some and insipid rules his richer nature revolted, and broke forth in this stern message to men to change their lives, and thus make themselves worthy of freedom: "Repent: the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

All classes gathered from Jerusalem and other parts to hear him. A motley crowd of half-curious and half-earnest folk they were; Pharisees and scribes, soldiers from Roman garrisons, tax-collectors, shame-stricken women, and other outcasts from the commonwealth of Israel.

The place itself added to the striking features of the scene. Not far from where the preacher stood declaring that "the axe is laid to the root of the trees, and every tree that bears not good fruit God will hew down and cast into the fire," was the plain where, according to the legend that still had weird power upon the people, the wicked cities had been destroyed by fire from heaven. So powerful and heart-hitting were the words of counsel and reproach that many confessed their sins, and were baptised in the Jordan as a symbol of the cleansing of their souls from guilt. As often happens after the emotions have been under unhealthy strain, as at "revival" and such-like services, when the novelty had worn off, some went back to live their old lives, but a society of faithful disciples was formed of which we find traces long after the death of John.

Among the hearers drawn by the fame of the preacher from Galilee was Jesus, then in the prime of manhood. He found in John a spirit which beat him to his own; in his words, life-bringers, satisfying yearnings that in Galilee could not be uttered, or, if uttered, not understood, by his fellows there; and, in token of his acceptance of John's demand of his desire to give himself to God, was baptised by him. The fair reputation he had borne in Nazareth, and which slanders and libels of his foes years after his death could tarnish, is proof of his devout and holy life; yet the busi-

¹ *Apocryphal Gospels*, pp. 111, 112, Cowper's ed.

words of John made him feel that he fell short of the ideal he had striven to reach. For it is not the self-contented, but the pure, who dare not thank God that they are "not as other men are."

The Gospels record that after his baptism Jesus withdrew to some part of the wild desert in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, where he fasted "forty" days and "forty" nights.¹ There he underwent a terrible struggle. Doubts perplexed him as to his fitness, as to his sufficing goodness for the work of "preaching the kingdom," and as to the rightness of the step which cut him adrift from home and kindred and sent him on a path beset with peril. In the end, the weariness of body induced by hunger and sleeplessness so affected and overturned his brain that the demons with which popular ignorance peopled such lonesome spots seemed to have actual shape, and, in the supreme moment of agony and struggle between the better and the worse, Satan, the arch-fiend, who was commonly believed in at that time, appeared to stand before him and beguile him from his purpose by bribes and taunts which Jesus repelled with words from the Jewish scriptures. The battle with the "tempter" over, there fell on the soul of Jesus a great calm, and the repose that followed was sweetened with visions of ministering angels.

So in the old Persian scriptures² the evil spirit Drukhsh comes forth to frustrate the holy aims of Zarathustra, and is routed by sacred words; and in the temptation of Gautama the Buddha,³ the author of evil, Mára, has, after many attempts to entice him, to retire defeated, when guardian angels attend the victor with words of comfort and scatter flowers and pour perfumes over him. At the base of these legends, as of those about the "saints" of the early and middle

ages, where half-starved monks and nuns see the devil in all sorts of forms, ghastly and alluring, as also of the traditions of savage races, there is the fact of their origin solely in unhealthy action of the mind induced by weakness or weariness, and, to an intense degree, by fastings. As Dr. Tylor says: "Bread and meat would have robbed the saint of many an angel's visit; the opening of the larder must many a time have closed the gates of heaven to his gaze."⁴

On leaving the desert news reached Jesus that his dear friend and counsellor had been cast into prison by Herod Antipas. The "Gospel According to Luke" says that John's offence was that he had dared to reprove the king for his unlawful marriage with his brother's wife, while Josephus tells us Herod feared that the great influence which John had over the people might put it into his power to raise a rebellion.⁵ For he went about preaching the advent of the "kingdom of heaven," and, whatever he and his followers may have meant by that phrase, to the Romans it savoured of treason—setting up another rule. Herod knew that John shared the hopes then uppermost in the minds of his race—shared, therefore, their bitter hatred of the power that drained them of their young men for soldiers, and seized their goods for taxes. So he silenced the bold man who had wandered into his territory, fearful that he might excite a rebellion, the slightest success of which imperilled Herod's favour with the emperor.

No doubts crossed the mind of Jesus on hearing this cheerless news as to the course which he should take. It was to carry on John's work, if not in exactly the same way, for they were men of unlike temperament, with the same unflagging zeal. Breaking new ground, he returned to Galilee, fixing his preaching-centre at the little town of Capernaum,

¹ Matt. iv. 2.

² *Vendidad*, xix., cf. Haug, p. 252.

³ Beal's *Romantic History of Buddha*, pp. 199, et seq.

⁴ *Prim. Culture*, ii. 367.
⁵ *Antiq.*, xviii. 5, 2.

situate on the busy shores of the lovely Lake of Tiberias, "the eye of Galilee," and dwelling as a guest in the house of two brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew,

who gained their living by fishing, and whose friendship he may have made in earlier days.

II.—SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT JESUS

BEFORE attempting any sketch of the public life of Jesus, it is needful to say somewhat concerning the materials from which it is drawn, and thus justify the uncertainty with which we must speak about all that attaches to him. These materials are found mainly in the "Gospels" with which the New Testament begins, for, although certain "Epistles" or letters in that collection were written earlier, they supply no account of the life of Jesus. Their author, the Apostle Paul, who did not know him, was addressing people supposed to be acquainted with traditions then current, and moreover his main object was to set forth the relation in which he believed Jesus, as ascended into heaven, whence he was expected to return, stood towards his disciples. Outside the New Testament the references are very scanty. Josephus, who was born two years after the death of Jesus, makes mention of him in two places in his celebrated history, but the longer passage¹ has been altered by a Christian hand, so as to make it appear that Josephus regarded Jesus as more than a man. In the Talmud he is spoken of with contempt and stupid rancour, while among the few passages in pagan writers the most precious is that of Tacitus,² who alludes to the death of Jesus under the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, in a way that shows what little stir that event created at the time. Indeed, he, like other observing men of his day, did not realise

what a tremendous power the Christian religion was to become in the world. To them it was an offshoot of Judaism, and the remarks even of noble-minded men like Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius are pitched in the same tone of contempt in which they spoke of the Jewish religion. The reason is not far to seek. The conquests of the Empire involved the toleration or suppression of the various religions of its subject-peoples, and so long as these religions came not into conflict with the primary object of the Roman religion—the supremacy and safety of the state, which supremacy and safety rested on the goodwill of the gods—the several foreign cults were allowed free scope, and their deities admitted to the Roman pantheon. Suppression appears to have been exercised only when any religion was attended with immoral and repulsive rites, or when it threatened to undermine the foundations of the state religion. The former explains the abolition of Bacchic associations 188 B.C., and the prohibition of Isis worship 50 B.C. The latter explains the persecution of Jews and Christians, between whom we know that no love was lost. The offence of these was their aloofness, and refusal to pay honor to the gods, neglect of whom, it was believed, would be the downfall of Rome. And in Roman eyes the Christians were greater offenders than the Jews, because while the latter were non-aggressive, the former were in active, often in direct, and often unwarranted, opposition to the accepted order of things, as in their refusal

¹ *Antiq.*, xviii. 3, 8. ² *Annals*, xv. 44.

to discharge imperial, civic, and social duties. Mr. Hardy says, in his *Christianity and the Roman Government*, "the Christian was the Nihilist of the day" (p. 46). Little wonder, therefore, that in an age of violent and repressive measures the death-penalty was enforced, although this was much rarer than the martyrologists record. "The persecutions of Christians have naturally been painted by Christian tradition in extremely exaggerated colours. It is now beyond a doubt that the number of victims butchered by Christian fanaticism in the dark ages of religious discord is far greater than the death-roll in the persecution of Christians by heathens."¹

To return to our materials of knowledge about Jesus. Of the four Gospels, those "according to" Matthew, Mark, and Luke, although written from different standpoints, and with discrepancies in detail of some of the more important incidents that cannot be reconciled, are, on the whole, in fair agreement concerning what they narrate. For that reason they are called the "Synoptics," from a Greek word, meaning "seeing together." But the fourth, and latest, that "according to" John, is so clearly the work of a man full of the views of a certain school about Jesus, and more intent on setting these forth than on writing his life, that, although it is of exceeding beauty, it is of small value for our purpose.

Jesus wrote nothing himself, and these lives of him are based solely upon traditions which were preserved in the memories of his disciples, and handed down by word of mouth. They believed so fully in his speedy return to them after his death that all motive for writing down his sayings was taken away; hence these were suffered to float in unfixed form for some years, until the circle of the earlier disciples growing smaller, and the hope of his coming back fainter,

danger arose lest the treasured words should be lost. So, little "sayings of the Lord" were made by one and another, and passed current among the believers, receiving additions from time to time. From these and oral traditions "in the air" were compiled the memoirs out of which grew the Gospels, the earliest trace of which in their present form is in the latter half of the second century.²

From this we see that any record of a man so remarkable as Jesus of Nazareth has been left to chance alone. No disciple attended him to note down the wondrous words as they fell, and guard every utterance with jealous care; no one took up the pen directly after his death to tell the beautiful and moving story, and we are left to grope our way among confused, meagre, and in some degree hopelessly conflicting, records, gleaned from them how a peasant of Galilee, who had lived in an obscure village for full thirty years, appeared as a preacher of the "kingdom of God," was attended by crowds of eager listeners, of whom but a few remained faithful, and, changing his views regarding himself, attacked priesthood in its stronghold at Jerusalem, and was there put to death as a mover of sedition.

Coming to us in the way thus outlined, it is no matter for wonder that the records sadly lack arrangement, and that we cannot set down, except in very rough and uncertain fashion, the *order of events* in the life of Jesus. According to the "Synoptics," this ministry lasted about a year, beginning in Galilee, where it was carried on till he went to Jerusalem and there met his death. According to the fourth Gospel it began at Jerusalem, and was varied by journeys into Galilee, and even through Samaria, lasting in all about three years. A like difficulty meets us in striving to arrange the *order of the sayings* of Jesus, because in the Gospels discourses given at various times are lumped together, as, for example, in the

¹ Koch's *Roman History*, p. 143, and cf. Lecky's *History of European Morals*, i., pp. 463, ff.

² See Appendix; Note F.

"Sermon on the Mount," which, by the way, Luke says was preached upon a plain; and the only method of picking out the earlier sayings from the later is by first acquainting ourselves with the earlier and later views of Jesus concerning his mission, and thus fixing the probable occasions which called forth his utterances.

No less a difficulty faces us when we ask what warrant we have that the Gospels record his *exact words*, for they were addressed to unlearned men mostly drawn by Jesus from his own rank in society, and sharing the gross beliefs of their class—men who often could not understand his meaning, and so the words as they passed into their minds conveyed quite another sense than that in which he who was so much "over the heads" of his hearers used them. And then the records, the work of men who wrote from hearsay, differ from one another in reporting the same matters, so that we cannot say which is the correct version, and must lament that both he and his hearers, and the writers of the Gospels as well, could not foresee what opposing views about him would arise in after years, what value would be attached to his words, causing these to be quarrelled and fought over and died for by unnumbered men and women. The marvel is, even making full allowance for the greater power of the human memory in bygone times to faithfully report traditions word for word, and for the striking and best-remembered form, as parable and pithy saying, in which so much of his teaching was cast, that what has survived of all he said impresses us as truly embodying its spirit;¹ vivid,

indeed, must have been the image of the teacher; vivid the manner and matter of his teaching, which, filtered through many minds and many tongues, touches us through the simple and stately language of our English Bible.

Added to the drawbacks which have been named, there are the legends and miracles with which the four lives of Jesus are suffused, and which, in showing us that the prevailing belief in these things was shared by the writers of the Gospels, make us careful what we accept from them. Of this, however, more anon; here the sole object is to show that there are no ancient writings to which greater importance has been given, and of which so little can be known, although from them men are from time to time constructing lives of Jesus as minute and wordy as if every detail about him, with undisputed vouchers of its truth, were in their hands. Now, the foregoing outline of the nature and value of the sources of knowledge on this subject will not be without service if it saves us from reading the countless books in which scholars have discussed the age and authorship of the Gospels—an irksome task, which few will perform, and from which none can profit. It will also suffice to show that a *life* of Jesus, in the usual sense of that word, is *impossible*; that all we can hope for, as we read the obscure phrases and varying statements of these ancient Gospels, is to gather some idea of the secret of the enduring power of a man whose influence for good in this world cannot well be overrated. And in this life of ours, which finds so much serious work ready to hand, it is some gain to learn that among the self-appointed and resultless tasks over which men have spent years are all attempts to construct lives of Jesus from the Gospels, and systems of doctrine from the sayings, whereby the beauty and the truth of these may elude us, and the life of Jesus in them escape.

¹ "The tradition of followers suffices to insert any number of marvels, and may have inserted all the miracles which he is reputed to have wrought; but who among his disciples, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels?"—J. S. Mill, *Essay on Theism*, p. 253.

III.—THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS

Jesus, perhaps attracted by the loveliness of the district and its numerous population, among whom were many welcoming faces, made, as already stated, his headquarters at Capernaum, and thence travelled from town to town in the neighbourhood, seizing on every chance that offered itself, whether in the house where he tarried as a guest, or by the wayside, or in the market-place, or in the fishing-boat rocking by the lake shore, or on the hillside and plain, to proclaim his message. Whenever he could, he made choice of the synagogues, which were open not only on Saturdays, when the most important service was held, but also on Mondays and Thursdays to suit the country folk, who brought their produce to market, and laid their disputed cases before the local sanhedrin which existed in every town. Success rapidly attended his mission. Many gathered round him, following him with more or less steadfastness over the little tract of country where he laboured, and forming the kernel of a society, as of brethren and sisters, from whom, we are told, he chose fellow helpers, twelve in number—perhaps in imitation of the “twelve” tribes of ancient Israel—and to whom he gave minute directions as to the mode of carrying on the work.¹ The simple needs of Jesus, who was never married, and of his co-labourers, were easily and willingly supplied. We read that “many ministered unto him of their substance.”² Rarely do we find them meeting with churlish treatment, for such was the charm of the Master’s manner, such the attractiveness of his message, that he made friends wherever he went. Apart from this, kindness to wayfarers is the rule in the East. Open places, or “khans,” for the lodgment of travellers

were provided along high-roads, and both the oral and written law of the Jews enjoined kindness to strangers. In Jerusalem each man was expected to throw open his house to pilgrims; and the rabbis not only said, “Let the needy be thy household,” but, “Let thy house be a meeting-place for the wise, and drink their words with thirstiness,”³ thus making the reception of sages and teachers an honour to the host.

At an early part of his ministry the loving heart of Jesus went out towards his kindred and friends that they might hear “the good news of the kingdom of God.” So “he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up for to read.”

In his time there was no small town in Palestine, or in any place abroad where Jews had settled, without its synagogue, for the most part plain, square-shaped buildings, but slightly decorated, for art had no home among the race to whom the commandment against graven images had been given.⁴ These places, which had their origin about the time of the Exile (although, according to the wild talk of the rabbis, they, in common with many other things, date from the age of the patriarchs), were the centres of Jewish life “for teaching every virtue which the human and the divine enjoin.” There were separate seats for men and women, the scribes and elders sitting on the “chief seats,”⁵ a pulpit for the “reader,” and in a niche in the wall facing Jerusalem, whither the Jew turned his face in prayer, the chest in which the rolls of the “law” were kept. The

¹ Cf. Matt. x. *passim*.

² Luke viii. 3.

³ *P. Abot*, i. 4.
⁴ Wisdom of Solomon, xv. 4, 5. 17.

⁵ Matt. xxiii. 6.

Sabbath service was very long; first many prayers, often "vain repetitions," as Jesus called them, which were offered standing, for the custom of kneeling was unknown to the Jews; then a portion of the "law," followed by a reading from one of the "prophets." After this a scribe or other adult Jew who so willed—for there was no fixed order of clergy—gave an address explaining what had been read or expressing his own ideas upon it, "bringing forth from his treasure things new and old," in which address was the germ of sermons in Christian assemblies. Of course, it happened that the more learned and fluent came forward to do this, and so the duty fell into the hands of a class honoured for it with the title of "Rabbi," or "Master"; but the privilege remained with every grown-up Jew, and the rabbis were more often than not men who toiled as handworkers for their bread.

On the Saturday morning when Jesus entered the synagogue of his native town, where he had worshipped as a boy, and perchance acted as an expounder when a man, the news of his arrival had spread, and old friends and neighbours came in to hear him. The lesson from the "law" being over, he stood up to read, and the "hazzan," or minister, "delivered unto him the roll of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book he found the place where it was written. The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down" ² (as was the custom of the rabbis when teaching) to expound the passage. Beginning by

saying to them, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," he proceeded, with the ready utterance which practice had given him, to speak words so exceeding sweet and gracious that the Nazarenes wondered, and put one to another the question, as if half doubting when they asked it, "Is not this Joseph's son?" according to other accounts asking: "Whence hath this man this wisdom? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James and Joses and Simon and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him."¹

He had grown up in their midst; some of them had played with him as a boy; he had received no better education than had been given to them, and now the commonplace dullards stood agape when it appeared what loftier spirit than their own had dwelt among them unheeded. The cause of their anger is not clear, but it would probably arise through the wider scope which he gave to the words of Isaiah; their narrowness evoked reproof from him; he retorted by telling them that "no prophet is accepted in his own country, or in his own house." Then some of the angrier among his hearers, so it is said, sought to kill him by throwing him from a steep rock, but he escaped down the mountain path, and returned to Capernaum.

How slender was the tie between Jesus and his relations, caring as he did so little for the bond of nature where no kinship of spirit was present, is shown in the following incident, which perhaps belongs to a later period in his ministry. One day, when a crowd had gathered round the house at Capernaum where he was preaching, some one pushed through to tell him that his mother and brethren wanted to speak to him. According to one account, they had given it as their belief that he was mad,³ and now per-

¹ Matt. xiii. 52.

² Luke iv. 17-20. Quoted, like most of the Old Testament passages given in the New, from the Greek version or Septuagint.

³ Matt. xiii. 54, 56; Mark vi. 2, 3.

⁴ Mark iii. 21.

chance sought to restrain him or take him back with them. Whatever may have been their motive, he harshly resented the interruption, asking, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" Then, looking upon his disciples, he said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother."¹ On another occasion, when

a woman in the crowd, moved by his winsome teaching, "lifted up her voice and said unto him, Blessed be the womb that bare thee and the breasts which thou didst suck, he answered," with what reproof, if the after idolatry of his mother had been known to him, let them ponder who practise it, "Nay rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."²

IV.—HIS MODE OF TEACHING

CONCERNING the method of his discourses, one of the "fathers," as the early Christian writers are called, thus tersely describes it: "His speeches were short and convincing, for he was not a sophist, but his word was the power of God." Like the sages and rabbis, he delighted in the use of pithy, telling sentences, which often sparkled with a fresh, kindly humour, and sank into the memory when more wordy discourses might have passed by unheeded. As, for example, in such sayings as these:—

"No one puts a new patch upon an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment and the rent is made worse."

"Neither do men put new wine into old skins, else the skins burst and the wine runs out. But they put new wine into new skins, and both are preserved."

"They that are healthy need not a doctor, but they that are sick."

"First pluck the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye."

"Which of you by anxious thought can add to his lifetime one cubit?"

"Some men strain out a gnat and swallow a camel."

"Do men gather grapes off thorns and figs off thistles? So men, like trees, are known by their fruits."

"If ye keep not that which is small, who will give you that which is great?"³

"The lamp of the body is the eye: if thine eye be sound, thy whole body will be full of light."

Sometimes he spoke in enigmas, as when he said:—

"Let the dead bury their dead."

"A camel shall go through the eye of a needle before a rich man shall enter the kingdom of God."

"He who saveth his life shall lose it."

But following an art dear to the story-telling East, the home of fable and of folk-lore, he freely made use of the "parable," placing beside, as that word means, the truth he taught some "illustration" from the life of men and the world around to *throw light* upon it, and make it clear or awaken attention, as in the story of the sage who one sultry afternoon, when expounding a subtle question of the law and seeing his listeners becoming drowsy, suddenly burst out, "There was once a woman in Egypt who brought forth at one birth six hundred thousand men." At this his hearers roused themselves, and then

¹ Luke xi. 27, 28.

² Westcott's *Study of the Gospels*, p. 426, where a list of the traditional sayings of Jesus is given.

³ Mark iii. 31-35.

the teacher calmly went on to tell them that her name was Jochebed, and that she was the mother of Moses, who was worth as much as all that number of armed men said to have gone up from Egypt under him, and, having thus secured their attention, went on with his subject.*

Of this art of teaching by parable and striking illustration Jesus was a master, not only winning men by the vividness and simpleness of his language, but by the homeliness of the sources whence his sketches are taken. Not often does he draw from the stores of Jewish history, never from the stars, perhaps because he shared the mystic awe with which his race looked on them, for in the Hebrew

tongue the same word serves for "angel" and for "star." But introducing his story after the manner of the rabbis by asking, "To what is the matter like?" he depicts men at their daily toil in vineyard, field, and town, and on the lake; their barterings, their merriments, mournings, and devotions; the children playing in the market-place; the debtors haled to prison; the wounded and robbed travellers by the highways; the lame and blind by the roadside; the lepers and the insane among the whitewashed tombs; in all, as in the illustrations borrowed from nature, the overcast or unflecked sky, the cornfields, the flowers in their unsought beauty, the birds in their toilless freedom, showing his observing skill.

V.—HIS RELIGION

TURNING from the manner to the matter of his discourses, let us try to gather from them what was the religion of Jesus; in other words, what were his ideas about God and man.

Of God he speaks again and again as a father with whom he lived in close fellowship ever strengthened by prayer, towards whom his love went forth with-

out stint, and into whose hands he committed himself in trust that never wavered. To speculate or argue about the nature of that Being was altogether foreign to his mind; he, the clear-souled and unquestioning, had ripened in obedience and love in sunny Galilee, undreaming of the bewildering guesses of philosophers both of East and West; untroubled by the perplexing thoughts born of larger views of the universe. We shall seek in vain among the sayings of Jesus for any additions to human *knowledge*, for any light on the darkling mysteries that quicken wonder and deepen reverence where these are not dulled and blunted by fables and half-truths; his work was to add to the sum of human *goodness*. He uses the terms about God found in the sacred writings of his people, coins no novel ones, but gives to the ancient words all the force of a new truth which he had worked out

* Which reminds us of the story about Demosthenes, to whose warnings against Philip of Macedon the Athenians wearied of listening. One day, when his hearers turned their backs on him, he cried out, "A man hired an ass of another man." At this the audience stopped to hear the tale, and Demosthenes went on: "At noonday he lay down in the shadow of the beast to rest, when the owner passing by saw him sleeping, and shaking him roughly said, 'You hired the ass, not his shadow.'" Demosthenes, seeing with what rapt attention the people were listening, paused and said: "O Athenians! when I tell you of your country's danger, you turn away, but you crowd about me when I narrate a silly story."

for himself, and tested and tried by his own heart's experience. And since man in the poverty of thought images to his mind the power that is beyond all thought under some symbol borrowed from that which stands to him for what is highest and best, it is easy to see how the conception of the Almighty as a parent makes appeal to pious souls. Fatherhood implies sonship, and Jesus, in thinking of God as a father, felt himself to be a son. Nor he alone. Believing this of himself, there followed those lofty ideas about the relation of men to God which were the source and secret of his power. For how could he look with other than reverence upon, or think meanly of, the meanest made in the image of God, or fail to be drawn the more pityingly to the poor, the forlorn, and the outcast, whose relation as children of the "Father in heaven" no act of their own, no veto of their fellows, no difference of rank or place in time, or even of race, since to this the teaching of Jesus tended, could cancel?

Citing the proofs of God's care with which the world abounded, Jesus invited his hearers to trust this heavenly Father, to ask him for what they needed, assured that nothing which is for their good will be withheld, to leave all fretful care to the "Gentiles," and for themselves take no undue thought about food or clothing, but seek "the kingdom of God," and aim after likeness to him, ever striving to know and do his will. Since religion is no matter of outward signs, they are to repent—that is, change the inner man; cleanse and guard the heart as that whence are the "issues of life." The law and the prophets are all summed up in love of God and love of man, and the proof of the first is in the practice of the second; in the self-forgetting and self-yielding of man for man is the doctrine of the cross.

Every great religion has insisted on the duty which man owes his fellow-man. The Hindu says, "Good people show mercy unto all beings, considering how like they are to themselves. The good

show pity even to worthless beings, as the moon withholds not its light from the hovel." Gautama the Buddha said: "Forgive insults, reward not evil for evil. Remember that all virtues spring from charity. Address ye your words to caste and to outcast, for salvation is within their reach." Confucius said: "What I do not wish men to do to me I also wish not to do to them." Rabbi Hillel, when a man came to him and asked him to teach him the whole law while he stood on one leg, calmly replied: "Good, my son; what is unpleasing to thee do not to thy friend. This is the whole law; the rest is only its application." But Jesus, passing beyond this, counselled active charity: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

In other words, the good of one makes for the good of the whole, and the harm which men do arises from their forgetting or not knowing their true place as parts of the whole with which they should strive to work in unison. They are to be active in good deeds, and this not vauntingly; to forgive injuries; to judge righteous judgment, as Rabbi Hillel said, "Judge not thy friend until thou standest in his place"; not to love only those who love them, but their enemies also; to do good and lend, hoping for nothing again save to be the "children of the highest," towards whom their desires are to go forth in the spirit of this prayer² which Jesus taught his disciples:—

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the evil one."

When we remember how the free play

¹ "Be not as slaves that minister to the lord with a view to receive recompence, and let the fear of heaven be upon you."—*P. Aboth*, i. 3.

² Not necessarily composed by Jesus. In this, as in other matters, he drew on the rich devotional literature of his countrymen.

of the human mind has been stifled for centuries since his day by the notion of its powerlessness to discern, unaided, the true from the false—notions born of the old belief in the “fall” of man—it is very important to note how Jesus addresses his hearers as able to judge for themselves concerning the truth or the error of his teaching, and counsels them to trust and use the powers of reason and insight which were given them from God. “Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?” he asks—that is, do not accept the thing as true because I say it, or because, as is the manner of the scribes, the “thorah” enjoins it or the rabbis require it, but test it, first as approving itself to your better nature, and then by applying it to daily life.

As one dwells on these facts at the core of the teaching of Jesus—the unity and possible goodness of man as the sufficing motives to work for his salvation—one thinks how his great heart, albeit he was no man of science, would have gladdened at all the proofs which are forthcoming in our time in support of a truth which was to him an inspiration. For science is ever bringing from the treasury of nature witness to the oneness of things seemingly unlike, phases of one force under many forms, showing that their myriad differences are not in kind but in degree, being the resultants of subtle changes in the same compounds which elude the keenest search.¹ It is not to be doubted that all the races of men are one in the mode of their beginning and advance, slow or quick as this may have been, from lower to higher stages of culture and belief; that man stands not apart from creatures beneath him, but is the topmost branch of the great tree of life, whose roots, deep down in the past, have formed and fed alike

the humblest and the noblest; as imaged in the Iggdrasil of our Norse fathers, which, watered by the Norns, bound together the upper and the under worlds. Science has further shown us that the unlikenesses between men themselves as grouped into races, or as separate one from another, which we note in their customs and beliefs as in their faces and skins, arise solely from the varied life brought about by the different countries which they inhabit, and that each is what he is in virtue of past and present causes. From these facts, while we do not cease to praise or to blame the motives and actions of others, we learn lessons of charity, uncover the sources of pity, and are moved to effort to remove the causes which thwart the advance of man and divide him from his fellows.

Now, let us see what Jesus appears to have meant by the “kingdom of heaven,” which, echoing the message of the Baptist, he announced was “at hand,” first saying somewhat more in detail about the Messianic hopes in his time. So vague and unfixed were these, each man shaping them either in gross or refined form, according to the bent and habit of his mind, that they cannot be clearly stated. But one feature was common to all—the advent of a Messiah as an earthly deliverer. For to the people at large, whose pride was wounded and whose longing for freedom was fanned by their subject state, no other view was possible. Speaking roundly, it was widely held that, between the age that then was and the age that was to come, there lay the judgment of the nations, to be ushered in by awful portents. Poring over the books of Daniel, Enoch, and kindred writings, and taking the figures of speech of the old prophets for facts, the Jews had framed a weird picture of the woes that would usher in the last days—the light of heaven quenched; hail, brimstone, and fiery all-swords falling from the sky; the “all-producing earth shaken by the immortal

¹ “We are, as matters now stand, about as far from a knowledge (by vision) of the ultimate structure of organic bodies as we should be of a newspaper seen with the naked eye at a distance of one-third of a mile.”—H. C. Sorby, *Microscop. Jour.*, March, 1876, p. 115.

hand"; lofty peaks broken, mountains crumbling, and misty ravines filled with the dead foes of God, their blood streaming in torrents along the plains, their souls cast "into a deep place, full of fire, flaming, and full of pillars of fire." At the coming of the judge of all, the pious who had died nobly would arise to enjoy the fruit of their self-sacrifice, and the chosen yet alive would be caught up into the sky, where, amid the vanishing of the worn-out heaven and earth, a new Jerusalem should appear, and there the temple of God, in which saints and angels would praise him, would be placed. Then would the world's empires be shattered and the world-wide reign of the Messiah begin. Jerusalem, the seat of his throne, would be built with houses three miles high, as it is written, "It shall be lifted up," and guarded with gates of pearl and precious stones. No sick or maimed would be found there—men would live centuries; the land would yield ready-spun wool; in every cluster of grapes, which could scarce be drawn by a yoke of oxen, there would be thirty jars of wine; the stalks of corn would be as thick as trees, and white flour blown from their ears by the wind of God.

Such were some of the fantastic forms in which the poor dreamers after happiness in Palestine, nigh two thousand years ago, yearning for "what is not," shaped that belief in the replacement of the old by a newer and better which is common to "a creature made of Time living in this place of Hope." As we read the books of the New Testament, chiefly the Book of Revelation, in the light of these 'insel visions, we discover from what sources the early Christian writers drew those details of a final judgment, a glittering heaven and a burning hell, on which rests the staple belief of the unthinking and the vulgar, and which are the instruments whereby sensational preachers often seek to attract or frighten people into being good. This, however,

by the way, thus much being quoted to show that, if there was any subject upon which the disciples of Jesus were likely to misunderstand him and give a twist to his words, it was this subject of the Messianic hope. Happily we have with the records of his sayings the blundering comments of these unlettered men upon them, by which they exhibit themselves as sharing the popular belief; and it is in the contrast between the two sets of ideas that those of Jesus stand out so clearly. From boyhood he had been familiar with the hopes that burned in the hearts of his race, and with the stories of revolts such as that of Judas of Galilee against a counting of the people for the purpose of taxing them, which happened when Jesus was about ten years old. And he saw that these had all failed; that, if they had succeeded, the state of the nation would be little changed thereby, because, steeped in the study of the nobler prophets, whose rare insight into the secret of human blessedness he shared, he had other ideas than the rabbis and the zealots as to "the things which belonged to Israel's peace."

With loftier meaning and in fairer form than the rugged prisoner of Herod Antipas, he taught that the kingdom of heaven, which would be upon earth, the scene of man's aims and strivings, was not to be heralded by falling stars and unsheathed swords. Men would not point to this and that portent and omen saying, "Lo, here! lo, there!" because the kingdom "which shall never be destroyed" was to be a kingdom of the spirit, of noiseless growth like the wheat plant from the seed, of silent working like yeast in meal; it was to be the reign of goodness—that is, of God—in the heart of man, and whether Cæsar or a king of David's line reigned in Jerusalem mattered not to it, "for the kingdom is within you." It was neither in upsetting old laws nor in framing new ones; neither in washing hands and dishes nor in leaving them unwashed; for in this there was naught to test or verify, save that the thing unclean could

be cleansed ; it was to be in a change of the inner self ; the heart, as the source of good or evil, made pure, that the stream of thoughts and acts might flow clear. That is what Jesus meant by his message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"—that, while men remained uncleansed from selfishness and sin, all fights for freedom, all laws to make them good and purge society of evil, were vain ; "cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."

Insisting on rightness of conduct induced by goodness of heart, he utters these sayings, which, if not among the earliest, are as the core of his teaching, and unfold the secret of his power to touch men's feelings as no strings of dry maxims and forbidding laws could touch them :—

"Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted."

"Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth."

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness : for they shall be filled."

"Blessed are the merciful : for they shall obtain mercy."

"Blessed are the pure in heart : for they shall see God."

"Blessed are the peacemakers : for they shall be called the children of God."

"Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven : but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."

And he ceased not to lay stress on this subdual of man's will to the will of God, drawing them not by argument, to which there is always another side, but by demand upon their effort, setting forth that entrance to the kingdom of heaven is not by passing an examination in theology, or by study of the law, or by mastering all tradition, any more than one becomes an engineer by learning

how Watt discovered the power of steam ; but by faithful and glad discharge of the duties that lie nearest us. A man's religion should be that of which he is most sure, and this comes only by testing it, for, says a Hindu book, "He who is practical is the truly learned ; a well-devised medicine does not by its name restore the sick."¹ And in one of his most forceful addresses Jesus compares the man who hears his word and does it to one who builds a house upon a rock, and he who hears his word and does it not to a foolish man who builds upon the sand, for when "the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house, it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Highest in the scale of duty Jesus placed the casting out of self-love, the yielding of one's self for others' needs. Not that we are to be careless about ourselves, and thus engender selfishness in those who profit thereby, but careful only in so far as we best fit ourselves for service ; ruled always by a desire for the welfare of all, in carrying out which we may sometimes do for others and ourselves what is best at the cost of what is most pleasant. Happily, nature in all its beauty, thought for our kin, the love they beget which makes effort blessed, the love of country and pride in its history, the stirrings of some noble and worthy cause, events both sad and sunny, the sight of suffering moving to pity ; all take us out of ourselves into the world about us, and have taught men in utter self-abandonment to fling life away for the advancement of what they have felt to be the good and the true. These are they who have "through much tribulation" entered the kingdom ; made "perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect," and among the greatest of these was Jesus.

While such is the general drift of his "gospel" ("god's-spell" or *good tidings*), injustice would be done it if the foregoing remarks left in the mind the

¹ Matt. v. 1-10.

² *Ibid.* vii. 21.

³ *Histopadesa* (tr. Johnson), p. 26.

notion that he built up any system of theology or delivered any creeds, or that it is possible to draw such from his teaching.

That which he did was to diffuse a common spirit of sweet charity and selflessness among men regarded as a brotherhood, because the offspring of one Father ; and to pull his sayings apart in search for this were as vain as to scatter the petals of a flower that we might *see* the scent. For the highest truth is that which cannot be defined, or imprisoned in any form of words ; and the secret of the enduring influence of Jesus is in this, that he enounced principles of world-wide application, leaving men free to connect them with any outward forms if they so willed, yet ever reminding them that "the letter killeth and the spirit giveth life." Upon these men have not quarrelled ; no questions are

raised as to the duty and blessedness of being pitiful and loving and helpful. The dividers of mankind which have roused deathless hates, and stained the fair earth with blood, are the dogmas which are either beyond proof, or the falseness of which is now clear ; dogmas which the ingenuity of theologians has spun from twisting of the reported sayings of Jesus ; or which—and this applies to the larger number—are of foreign origin, and of much later date than the Gospels. Happily, the importance once given to these is lessening ; the impure air needful to their sustenance is dispersing ; and, as they wither, men sort and explain them as extinct and curious objects are arranged and labelled in museums. But the spirit of Jesus will abide ; under its inspiration men will reach their oneness, even were his name to become forgotten.

VI.—JESUS AND THE PARTIES OF HIS TIME

IT is now needful to look at the attitude of Jesus towards the great parties into which the Jews were, to their hurt, divided, first acquainting ourselves with the standpoint of each.

The two principal among these were the Sadducees and Pharisees. The former, who were few in number, belonged to the wealthier and priestly classes, and courted the favour of the ruling powers in aiding them to control the masses, by whom they were hated. They obeyed the written law and the oral law, as framed by the "great synagogue," neither adding to these nor taking from them, holding that what was not taught in them might be rejected. They had no belief in angels, and, because the law promised earthly blessings in the form of long life to the faith-

ful, they held that the soul dies with the body, and that "on earth lies the aim for man ; his resurrection being in the children he leaves behind him"—a doctrine so barren of comfort to the suffering and the poor that Josephus tells us they "were able to persuade none but the rich."

The Pharisees, or "separated," as that word means, sprang from the body of the people, by whom they were as greatly, and on the whole as deservedly, loved as the Sadducees were detested. Their zeal for the "law" was untrifling ; they were liberal in their reading of it, accepting the constant additions to the traditions made by the scribes or "repeaters," who were the leaders of the party. The stern and severe language which in the latter part of his ministry Jesus uses in

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addressing them has caused great injustice to be done to their piety and earnest charity, because it is overlooked that his attacks were made upon the unworthy among them, who did their devout acts to be "seen of men," and against whom the Talmud speaks still more severely. It divides the party into seven classes, of whom one only is worthy. These are the "heavy-footed," who, exhausted by fasting, dragged wearily along; the "bleeding," who knocked their heads against walls to avoid looking at women; the "mortar Pharisees," who bent themselves like the handle of a mortar as they walked; the "hump-backed," who hung their heads; the "do-alls," ever on the watch to fulfil some trifling law; the "painted," whose pious manners could be seen from a distance. The true Pharisee is he "who does the will of his Father who is in heaven, because he loves him." Following the example of Ezra and Nehemiah, they opposed all union between other races and the Jews,¹ marking themselves off from their own countrymen in dress, manner, and mode of speech, and denying to some of them any part in a life to come.

Of course, there was deep hatred between Sadducee and Pharisee, the one representing the priestly power of the temple, the other the widespread influence of the scribes and rabbis through the synagogues and schools; the one upholding the letter of the law, the other explaining it in accord with new times; the one content with things as they were, the other dwelling on the hope of a Messiah to change everything.

The scribes were mainly divided into two parties, the one more unyielding than the other in disputes as to the latitude of the law. The most eminent rival leaders were Shammai, a man of narrow mind and hasty temper, and Hillel, a Babylonian Jew, who travelled

to Jerusalem to study the law, working as a wood-cutter for his living. Half his scanty wage went to pay his school fees; and once, having earned nothing, and the door-keeper refusing to let him in without fee, he climbed in the darkness to the window-sill of the school to listen, where he was well-nigh frozen to death. The next morning was a Sabbath, and when one of the rabbis, wondering why the window was so darkened, went out to look, he found it blocked by the poor scholar. So they brought him down and saved him, saying: "It is truly worth while to break the Sabbath on his account."

He gained immense knowledge, and at last, in the reign of Herod the Great, was chosen leader of the school and president of the Sanhedrin. He was one of the meekest and kindest of men; "be gentle as Hillel" became a proverb, and stories abound of the vain attempts to ruffle his patience. Some think that Jesus, who, according to certain accounts, was about ten years old when Hillel died, owed something to his teaching, and we know that the sayings of the rabbis were repeated in country synagogues. But this matters little. Jesus, like every other man, was a son of his time; unlike most men, he left it immensely his debtor.

The New Testament speaks only of Pharisees and Sadducees, but there was a third religious order called the Essences, which is described by Josephus.

These people, about whom little that is certain is known, had withdrawn themselves from the bustle and din of life and settled in groups in the wilderness near the Dead Sea, where they lived in obedience to the law, making it their daily study and keeping the Sabbath strictly. Each worked for the whole; their goods were held in common according to their maxim, "Mine is thine, and thine is mine." Their life, divided into seasons of work, thought, and prayer, is one that has had its charms for quiet-loving and distracted souls of many creeds and ages, but it has too often

¹ "Thou madest the world for our sakes; as for the other people which also come of Adam, thou hast said that they are nothing."—2 Esdras vi. 55, 56.

withdrawn the useful from work near at hand to vain search after personal salvation and other selfish aims.

Jesus was beneath the notice of the courtly Sadducees; the Essenes were scarcely known to him; with the smaller parties, as the Zealots and Herodians, he had no sympathy, and his intercourse from first to last was mainly with the Pharisees. There was, at starting, much to draw the two together; in the belief in one Almighty Being, in the duty of man to keep his commandments and show charity, in the love of righteousness and the longing for the kingdom of God, and in sharing current beliefs and superstitions, he and they had very much in common. The Pharisees were interested in him, asked him to their houses, and listened to him with respect until he seemed to slight or hold in light regard things on which they set high score.

It was in the very essence of the teaching of Jesus that it should reach beyond the narrow circle of the pious to the outcasts, just as, although his mission was at first confined to the Jews, it could not fail to extend to the Gentiles, and the first cause of offence to the Pharisees was his conduct towards "sinners" and "publicans." By the former term is meant in the Gospels not only those who had fallen into sin, losing sense of shame and self-respect, but persons who had been put out of the synagogues by the leaders for offences against the law. The "publicans" were Jews who acted as agents of Romans who "farmed" the taxes—that is, as already explained, paid a given sum into the Imperial treasury and bought the right to collect the revenue, making what profit they could. Such a system led to overcharges and cruel extortions, and the Jews who accepted this office were bitterly hated, cut off from the rights and privileges of their nation, and ranked among the heathen.

Jesus, who said that he came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance, invited these classes to come near

him, ate and drank with them, spoke kindly and hopefully to them. His faith in the love and mercy of God and the worth of men and women enabled him, unhampered by any doctrines about their "fall" and inherent badness, to deal with them as he found them; with their joys and sorrows; with the unrest under the hollow laugh; and towards these "lost sheep of the house of Israel" his great heart went forth in deep compassion. For him the featureless, commonplace people, whose pulseless, listless lives were unstirred by passion for either good or evil, or by pity for the erring, had no charm; but he was drawn to those whom the strict law of the Jews had made outcasts, for in them he saw power misused, and his care was to give it right direction, not "breaking the bruised reed." In loving the sinners, he did not the less hate sin,¹ and in his gracious presence they felt themselves before one who had deep insight into the heart of man, deep hope for it too, and they fell before him, telling him all the truth. The Pharisees had treated them as shut out from the mercy of God and the pity of their fellows, and they had sunk into reckless despair; Jesus had told them that a new and better life was within their reach, and they put forth "lame hands of faith" to grasp it. So the proud and self-elect were shocked; they murmured or complained outright, and brought as a charge against Jesus that which is the grandest tribute to his life-work, that he was "a friend of publicans and sinners."

One day, when "all the publicans and sinners drew near for to hear him," he silenced the grumbling of the Pharisees by asking them whether, if any man among them had a hundred sheep and lost one, he would not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and seek for that which had strayed, bringing it home

¹ "Rabbi Meyer once gave vent to his anger against an evil-doer, when his wife gently reproved him by pointing out that David prayed, 'Let sin cease from the earth, not sinners.'—Berithoth, 10; *De Sola Mendes*, p. 41.

rejoicing more over it than over those that went not astray? "Likewise," he added, "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repented more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." Then he put into this most touching parable the quenchless love of God for the repentant sinner.

A certain man had two sons, the younger of whom came to him and asked for his share of the property, receiving which, he left home and settled in a distant land, where he spent all that he had in riotous living. To add to the misery which then followed, a famine arose, and at last he became servant to a citizen of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs, the most degrading work that a Jew could undertake. So hungry was he that he "would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, but no man gave unto him." Then he bethought himself of home and home faces, of the hired servants of his father who had bread enough and to spare while he was starving. He resolved to return and confess his sins to his father, his unworthiness to be called a son, and ask to be made as a hired servant. As he neared the old home, the father, whose thoughts had often gone out to the wanderer, saw him in the distance, and, instead of awaiting him with angry look and folded arms, "had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." And the son asked his forgiveness and a place among the labourers; but the father bade them "bring forth the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and kill the fatted calf: for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." As the feast, enlivened by music and dancing, was going on, the elder son, who had been in the fields, drew near, and wondered what the lights and sounds of mirth and singing meant. When he heard the cause, he was angry and refused to go in, until his father came out and entreated him. He com-

plained that his father had never rewarded his faithful and willing service by giving him even a kid to make a feast with his friends, whereas, directly his scapegrace brother returned, ragged and penniless, a fatted calf had been killed for him. Then the father, reminding him that all was his as the heir, urged his joy at the missing lad's return as excuse for the feasting. "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found."

Another parable, in which he reproachfully and more openly sketches the Pharisee, is that describing how two men went up to the temple to pray: one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: "O God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extorters, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all my income." The publican, standing at the entrance to the temple court, would not lift his eyes to heaven, but, smiting his breast in penitence, cried: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" "I tell you," added Jesus, "this man went down to his house justified in the sight of God more than the Pharisee."²

The attitude of Jesus towards "sinners" is made clear by the following story:—

One day a pious Pharisee named Simon asked Jesus to dine with him. Soon after the meal had begun there came in through the door, left open for guests in accordance with Eastern custom, a woman of bad life, who, hearing that Jesus was there, had stolen in. She brought in her hand an alabaster box of ointment, and drawing near to the place where, after the manner of the country, he reclined, leaning on his arm while his body rested on a cushion, the feet being thrown backwards, she bowed her head weeping, and as she reverently kissed his feet bathed them with her tears. Then, recovering from her grief,

¹ Luke xv.

² *Ibid.* xviii. 10-13.

she wiped his feet with her long flowing hair, and poured over them the oil so refreshing to the skin in hot climates. When Simon saw all this he was surprised and shocked, and said to himself, or in undertone : " This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is who toucheth him ! "

Jesus, who read Simon's feelings in his face, said, " Simon, I have somewhat to say to you," and, receiving assent, told this story : " There was a creditor who had two debtors, one of whom owed him five hundred pence [or *denarii*, nearly twenty pounds of our money] and the other fifty [nearly two pounds]. And when they had nothing wherewith to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most ? " Simon answered and said : " I suppose that he to whom he forgave most." And Jesus said : " Thou hast judged correctly." Then he turned to the woman and said : " Seest thou this woman ? I entered thine house, but thou gavest me no water wherewith to wash my feet after putting off my sandals : but she hath washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss : but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint : but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment." And all for her great love : " Wherefore I tell thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven." And the guests murmured among themselves, asking who he could be that forgave sins ; but Jesus, heeding them not, said to the woman : " Thy faith hath saved thee : go in peace."

But it was in the eyes of the Pharisees a still greater crime that Jesus should slight the law, which was to them the supreme and complete rule of life and

source of knowledge, and concerning which, as showing how all-embracing in his day it was regarded, Josephus says : " The giver of the law has left nothing in suspense ; beginning from the earliest infancy, and the details of family life of every one, he left nothing even of the very smallest consequence to the disposal of those for whom he gave laws " ;¹ and the care of the scribes had been that nothing should remain undetermined, and thus come to be treated as a matter on which people might use their own judgment. The exclusion of these men from public affairs, and from the books of other nations, left them the more free to spend time over the " *thorah*," to haggle over its meaning, find hidden secrets in its numbers and the forms of its letters, and multiply inane triflings which emptied their work of its nobler aim of searching for the moral facts in writings held as sacred. But such danger always attends the centring of the mind on a single subject, giving it an undue importance, and losing its true measure of relation to other things. It is an old proverb which bids us beware of the man of one book.²

Upon two matters, cleansings and the sabbath, rules had been greatly increased by the time of Jesus, and it was his attitude towards these that brought him into sharp collision with their defenders.

The great body of Jewish rites and ceremonies is of kindred origin to that of other races. The laws dividing food into clean and unclean are the outcome not merely of dislike to certain animals, but of that nature-worship under which creatures dreaded by man were objects of reverence and awe ; and out of the feeling of defilement after touching a corpse, shedding blood, etc., has arisen the widespread practice of dipping or sprinkling persons and things by water, or passing them over fire, to purify them. The Egyptians had very strict laws concerning uncleanness ; the life of

¹ Luke vii. 36-50.

² c. *Apion*, ii. 18.
" *Cave ad hominem unusus libro.*

a Brahman is one long ceremony of washings; and from the Persians, whose religion had much in common with the ancient Hindu, the Jews appear to have added to their laws as to "purifications." The sixth section of the Mishna or text of the Talmud, containing one hundred and twenty-six chapters, is devoted thereto, and of these four chapters to the washing of hands alone!¹ We saw that John was surnamed the Baptist, as plunging his disciples into the Jordan, in symbol of the washing of the soul from sin;² the Apostles in like manner immersed their converts, as do certain Christians to this day. The use of "holy water"³ has its rise in the lower culture; and the sprinkling of babies, without which some Christian sects actually hold they will go to hell, has its counterpart among savage races, who in naming the newly-born wash or otherwise purify it.

Jesus, be it remembered, was a Jew by birth and training, although "son of man" by thought and feeling, and when he began his mission he had no idea of becoming the founder of a new religion,

of upsetting the law whose precepts he had been taught to obey, or of attacking the priests and scribes. But his views regarding the nature of the kingdom of God could not fail to make him push mere law and precept on one side when they stood in the way of its advance. Law was to him no rigid thing, but given, as he said, for "the hardness of men's hearts," and they who carried out the spirit, of which the early code was the imperfect expression, were more faithful "sons of the law" than they who, obeying the letter, paid tithe of herbs, mint, anise, and cummin, and left the weightier matters of judgment and mercy undone. Moreover law as such is for slaves and subjects, and therefore in its essence is opposed to love, by which it is supplanted in those whom the truth has made free. The interest awakened in the towns and villages of Galilee by the prophet of Nazareth had caused the rulers of the Pharisees at Jerusalem to send some of their number to observe him, and in their scrutiny of his acts they would specially note his disregard of certain laws. His outspoken attitude is clearly shown on the occasion when the Pharisees, who held that "to eat bread with unwashed hands was a crime deserving punishment in this world and the next," and whom the Sadducees jeeringly said would "clean the face of the sun if they could," asked him: "Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat the loaf with unwashed hands?" to which he replied:—

"Of the precepts on this matter the following is a sample: 'The hands become legally unclean or legally clean, up to the wrist. 'How?' 'If one poured the first ablution up to the wrist and the second above the wrist, and the water ran back into the hand?' 'It is clean.' 'If one poured the first and second ablutions above the wrist, and the water ran back into the hand?' 'It is unclean.' 'If one poured the first over one hand, and afterwards the second on both hands?' 'They are unclean.' 'If one poured the first over both hands, and afterwards the second over one hand?' 'His hand is clean,' etc.—Barclay's *Talmud*, p. 326.

* In ancient Peru an Inca, after confession of guilt, bathed in a stream and uttered these words: "O thou river, receive the sins I have this day confessed unto the Sun, carry them down to the sea, and let them never more appear"; and in like manner the Hindu prays: "Take away, O waters, whatsoever is wicked in me."—Tylor's *Primit. Cult.*, ii., p. 396.

³ A mixture of salt and water was placed at the entrance to Pagan temples, and the aspergillum, or brush for sprinkling the worshippers, is shown on bas-reliefs. See Conyer Middleton's *Letter from Rome* for numerous parallels between pagan and Christian rites.

"Well hath Isaiah prophesied of you hypocrites, This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.....For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death; but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban" (that is, offered in vow to Jehovah, by which a duty was often evaded), "he is released from his duty as a son, and ye suffer him no more to do aught for his father or

his mother, making the word of God of none effect through your tradition which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one and understand, there is nothing from without a man that entering into him can defile him, but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.¹

Mercy was more than sacrifice; prayer was in vain unless it came from the heart; the command not to kill meant also that men were to subdue the anger which leads to murder; the oath to heaven was needless where the truth was spoken. Thus did Jesus, in the spirit of the old sage, bid his hearers "keep their heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

Regarding the sabbath, which we saw had its rise in ancient moon-worship, and which in Hebrew legend was first proclaimed from Sinai, the rabbis had, indeed, "made a hedge about it" of "line upon line and precept upon precept," although they kept their own shoulders free from the burdens which they laid upon others. They prescribed the kind of oil with which lamps were to be trimmed, what knots might be tied, how far a man might walk, what he might carry. He must not bear the weight of a dried fig, but he might carry a locust's egg to cure ear-ache, or a fox's tooth to cure sleeplessness, or the nail of a crucified man for ague; he must not wear sandals with nails in them; and whether a cripple might go out on his wooden leg was a matter upon which the rabbis were not agreed. It was forbidden to set a broken bone; also to walk on the grass, because that was a kind of threshing; a tailor must not go out with his needle, or a scribe with his pen near dusk on the eve of the sabbath. It was believed that the day was kept "in heaven and hell, and that even the tortured souls in Gehenna had rest."² Pious streams were known which flowed

only on the seventh day, and yet more pious ones which then stopped, resuming their course on the first day.¹

Jesus did not deny the sacredness of the sabbath, or dispute the wisdom of a law designed to secure rest to toilworn man and beast; but he loathed and scorned the plea that made it an excuse for refusing to do works of mercy and satisfy natural wants. In a sentence which is the essence of his views, he said, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath," and made, therefore for man's good, man's service of his kind, for which all time and place is sacred, since the thing which it is wrong to do on that day it is wrong to do on any other day. Among the questions in dispute between the rabbis was the course to be taken when a sheep fell into a water-tank on the sabbath—should it be drawn out or given food and left there till the day was past?—and it was with this that Jesus, when he and his disciples were charged with sabbath-breaking, in quiet humour foiled his accusers by asking: "Which of you is there whose son or ox shall fall into a pit, and he will not straightway draw him up on the sabbath day?"² And they could not answer him these things.

We must not pass in silence over the way in which his teaching on this matter has been perverted, to the grievous harm of many, and the filling of their hours with weariness. From the time of the Apostles to beyond the fourth century, the first day of the week, which was observed as the day when Jesus was said to have risen from the dead, was not confounded

¹ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, vii. 5, 1.

² In the seventeenth century "Alexander Carnie w.a. delatit" before the Presbytery of Strathbogie "for brak of sabbath in bearing ane sheep upon his back from the pasture to his own house. The said Alexander compeirit and declarit that it was of necessitie, for saving of the beast's lyfe in tyme of storme. Was rebukit for the same and admonished not to do the lyke." For examples of the frightful tyranny of sabbatarians in past days, see *Graham's Social Life in Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. ii., pp. 48-55, 99.

¹ Mark vii. 6-15.

² Hausrath's *New Test. Times*, vol. i., p. 101.

with the Jewish sabbath, which it was held to have superseded, and the name of each day was kept distinct. Although the two days became by degrees more blended, it was not till long after the fourth century, when the Christian Church laid claim, like the rabbis, to power "to bind and to loose" the beliefs and actions of men, that the written and oral laws dealing with the sabbath were made to apply to the Sunday, and to be binding upon Christians. The extreme point was reached about three hundred years ago, in the days of the Puritans, who, repelled and shocked by the riotings throughout England on Sundays, rushed in the height of their power to excess of another sort, and enforced such a host of absurd and vexing rules for "keeping holy the sabbath day" that in obeying these men forgot or had scarcely time to be merciful one to another. To wash a

dish, or cook a dinner, or take a long walk, or ring more than one bell to call people to church, were accounted as great sins as murder; and the Pilgrim Fathers, when they settled in America, with the same misled zeal forbade bed-making, room-sweeping, and other needful cleansings, and, if the account is to be trusted,¹ enacted that "no woman shall kiss her child on the 'sabbath' day" or on "fasting days." It is well for us, who live in freer and more joyous times, to learn from what we are delivered, for, although the influence of these men abides among us still, it is slowly yielding to common sense, and by-and-bye the Christian Sunday will cease to be confounded with the Jewish sabbath, and to remain, as in so many households yet, a frown upon the children's ringing laughter and a lock upon their story-books.

VII. —MIRACLES

THE stir made by Jesus during his preaching tour had reached not only the ears of Jerusalem rabbis, but those of John the Baptist, still lingering in his prison at Machærus, and from him came two disciples to inquire into the truth of what he had heard, and to ask if the Messiah had appeared. "Art thou," they said, "the coming one, or must we look for another?" And he answered and said unto them: "Go and tell John what ye saw and heard, that blind receive sight, lame walk, lepers are cleansed, deaf hear, dead are raised, the poor have the Gospel preached to them, and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."²

This interview is cited not to dwell upon the contrast which it led Jesus to draw between himself and the man from whom he had received the impetus for his work, but because it seems likely that such a question, coming from one to whom Jesus must have given heed, set him pondering on the nature and aim of his ministry, and because the figures of speech in which, after his manner, his reply was couched, suggest return to the subject of the miracles said to have been wrought by him, the record of which fills so large a space in the four Gospels. There is the more reason for reference to them because it is a main object of this sketch of his life to show that the value

¹ From a code said to have been drawn up by Governor Eaton for New Haven Colony in 1656, and embodied in the *Blue Laws of Connecticut*, the genuineness of which is doubted.

² Matt. xi. 1-5.

of his teaching is quite independent of any belief in him as a miracle-worker, and of aught else wonderful that is recorded concerning him.

In his day, as in ages before and since, belief in miracles was universal, and, as the doubts which writers outside Palestine may have cast on them had not troubled the minds of the masses in their own countries, we are sure that they had not reached the more secluded Jews. It is not possible for us, who, in filling our minds with facts from science books, are in danger of dulling our sense of the wonder and beauty of this fair, order-abiding universe, to put ourselves in the place of the ancients and comprehend their notions about it. But it is easy to see that those notions would be their measure of the causes to which they referred startling events, or events whose causes were outside the limits of their knowledge, and to understand how, in all honesty, they, and people after them during the many centuries when science stood still, remained content in the easy explanations of their forefathers, so that the last thing of which they thought was to seek a natural cause for the uncommon. For example, we have seen how the influence of Persia had fostered Jewish belief in demons. Jesus held it,¹ for it was rampant in Galilee, as it is among Syrian peasants to this day, and it was believed that, the bodies of those creatures being mortal, but their souls immortal, they wandered in search of new bodies wherein to dwell, taking up their abode in men, or, failing these, in brutes, as in the story of the Gadarene swine, into two thousand of which Jesus is reported to have driven demons.² All

¹ "Jesus accepted the hypothesis of demoniac possession as easily as he accepted the hypothesis that the sun moves round the earth."—*Exploratio Evangelica*, p. 225.

² Matt. viii. 31; Mark v. 13; Luke viii. 33. Speaking of the late Archbishop Trench, the author of *Supernatural Religion* remarks: "He is probably the only one who asserts the reality of demoniacal possession formerly and at the present day" (p. 84, ed. 1902). The deceased prelate has his representative in the recently-

the ills the cause of which was not clear were laid upon them. If a man fell down in a fit, or shook with ague, or talked wildly, or even sneezed, it was the work of one or more demons within him, and hence arose the arts of using charms to prevent their entrance, and of exorcising or casting them out from the "possessed," by methods known to a select class. This explanation satisfied men; it seemed to account for the facts, and no further inquiry was deemed needful. In the absence of any science of medicine in that day, the oddest remedies, as kissing a mule upon the nose for a cold, eating the flesh of mice for lung disease, and of frogs for toothache, were in vogue, and the mind and body were regarded as quite apart from each other.

The disease spoken of as "possession" was probably madness of a more or less severe type, which prevailed largely among the Jews, being fostered by the state of excitement in which they lived, just as in Europe cases have occurred of the spread of disorders of the mind among masses of the people ruled by a common delusion.¹ The people thus afflicted were allowed to roam at large; no one dared to interfere with them save the exorcist, whose power, acting on the sufferer's imagination, often effected a cure; for certain nervous diseases which medicine fails to reach will sometimes yield to the influence of a stronger will, and, where belief in the virtue of these prevails, to the exercise of magic arts. Now, it is reasonable to assume that the exquisite feeling of Jesus for every form of suffering, joined to the look and tone of authority which marked him, would make him very skilful in using his gentleness and strength with soothing

appointed Dean of Canterbury, the Very Rev. Dr. Wacl, who, as one curious, almost comical, result of a famous controversy with Professor Huxley, informed his disputant that he had "removed the only objection" to his belief in the story (see the author's *Thomas Henry Huxley*, p. 187).

¹ Cf. Carpenter's *Mental Physiology*, pp. 312-315.

yet unmistakable power to bring the "possessed" to his "right mind." His success in such cases, and in other disorders, where comforting words would be as balm, would gain him high repute as an exorcist, and, joined to the current belief that the Messiah would signify his presence by signs and wonders, largely account for the reports which, after the manner of such, grow more wonderful as they spread, and were in the long years after his death magnified into tales of the marvels which he wrought, even to raising the dead. There are many instances on record in modern times of the cure of disorders by "suggestion"; and, as showing that the foregoing is no far-fetched explanation, we may cite the following story related by the famous chemist, Sir Humphry Davy.¹

A man suffering from paralysis came to him one day to be treated by electricity. On sitting down Davy placed a small glass thermometer-bulb under his tongue to take the temperature before beginning. The patient thought this was the instrument for curing him, and said he felt it run through all his system. Davy was curious to see what lasting influence the imagination only would exert, and without underrunning the man sent him away and told him to come daily and have the operation repeated. He did so, and each time the thermometer was placed as before in his mouth, with the same effect, and after a short time the man was cured.

We are not called upon to account for the source of each and all the miracles related in the Bible as worked not only by Jesus, but by prophets before him, and apostles after him, or of those said to have been performed by saints in virtue of power transmitted to them, or, to this day, by the Virgin Mother at Lourdes and other shrines. It suffices that the causes giving rise to belief in these fictions are made clear in acquaint-

ing ourselves with those crude notions about interference with the order of the universe which render any idea of the unbroken rule of law impossible. As knowledge of the supreme and unchecked order of nature advances, belief in miracle dies out, for when the law of a thing is found we refuse to look for a cause beyond nature, while so long as any department of the universe remains unexplored and unexplained, there the belief is found lingering. For example, in our own time, until weather changes were shown to be within the realm of law, men, in their craving for a cause, looked upon "plagues of rain" and severe droughts as the direct act of an Almighty Being, as the marks of his anger against a people's sin; indeed, prayers are still offered by some persons for their removal! An amusing illustration is given in Boswell's *Life of Dr. Johnson*² of the confusion which the ignorant make between cause and effect in the case of the islanders of St. Kilda, who invented all sorts of superstitions to account for their being seized with colds in the head whenever a ship arrived, until it occurred to a "Rev. Mr. Christian of Docking" to find the explanation in the fact that a vessel could enter the harbour only when a strong north-east wind was blowing! And in another part of Scotland the servants on a farm suffered every spring from fever and ague, which were viewed as the judgment of God upon their sins, until, with proper drainage of the land, the disorder disappeared.

Forgetting that other remarkable men besides Jesus, and that evil spirits likewise, have been credited with superhuman power, miracles were once regarded as proving that Jesus was a divine person—indeed, the deity himself, and that the Christian religion was revealed from heaven; but the number of thoughtful and devout persons who feel that belief in miracles is not only now impossible, but rather a vexation and a hindrance to the advancement of religion, is increasing.

¹ See also an article on "The Influence of the Mind on the Body," *Cornhill Magazine*, August, 1870.

² Croker's edit. (1860), p. 191.

1. To believe that Jesus performed miracles does not make his teaching more true or authoritative; the duties he enjoins, the love he would diffuse as the ground of these duties, abide whether he did or did not make the blind to see and bring the dead to life. Such belief, moreover, must remain outside us; it cannot help us to follow the example of Jesus, and to test for ourselves the truth of what he says.

2. Belief in miracle is a drag on the progress of mankind, because it makes them shrink from interfering with, or appearing to thwart, the hand of God. Arguing that the evil is permitted by him, and sent to warn or to punish them, it is thought impious to remove it. As man learns that the ills he has thus regarded as heaven-sent are curable and preventable, being the

result of neglect and ignorance, he sets to work with a will to banish them by obeying the law for breach of which he and his have suffered so keenly and so long.

3. It is a false and shallow notion that the surrender of belief in miracle involves the lessening or loss of our sense of the wonderful. There may be those in whom this sense is dead or sleeping; but a fearless following of the evidence before them by the truly wise, while it leaves behind the legends and pseudo-mysteries which men in the "times of their ignorance" invented, will bring them to the threshold of those abiding mysteries of the universe, the continued revelation of whose unbroken order becomes the inspiration of their own.

VIII.—JESUS ASSERTS HIS MESSIAHSHIP

RETURNING to the relations between Jesus and the Pharisees, now becoming strained, we find these men basely accusing him of casting out demons by the aid of Beelzebul, the "prince of the demons"; to which he retorted with an overwhelming argument: "Every kingdom or city or house divided against itself cannot stand; and if I, through Satan, whose agents work misery upon men, perform deeds of mercy, how can Satan's kingdom stand? But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then is the kingdom of God already come unto you."¹ By such a charge they had blasphemed God; they were in danger, he told them, of losing forgiveness both in this world and in the next.² Baffled and bitter, they sought to confound him

before the people by asking him for a "sign" whereby he might prove himself a true prophet, and thus command claim to a hearing; but he reproached them that they, who could read weather-signs and portents of events in the face of the sky, failed to read the future in the outlook of the times. He said that no other sign would come than that of Jonah, whose preaching, in causing the repentance of the heathen Ninevites, was a type of the acceptance by the Gentiles of the teaching of Jesus which the Jews rejected.

But these test-questions, these charges and murmurings, were the rumblings of a coming storm. The excitement aroused a few months before in the early stages of the ministry of Jesus had died away; the rustics of Galilee, who, with

¹ Matt. xii. 24, 28.

² *Ibid.* v. 31.

ears tickled by the music of words about the "kingdom," had flocked round him and made his progress from place to place as a triumph, fell away when the kingdom they looked for came not, and their attitude became listless or hostile. They were "like unto little children sitting in the markets, who call to the others and say: We piped unto you, and ye danced not; we sang a dirge, and ye lamented not."¹ And, indeed, this is not surprising, because, failing their acceptance and practice of his message to change their lives, there was nothing left but to fall into their old courses. Jesus was no sensation preacher, who could stoop to artifice and show to sustain interest; he proclaimed the truth and left the good seed of the kingdom to the care of God, not unaware, as shown in his parable of the different fate of the seeds scattered broadcast by the sower, of its reception by various hearers. But the disappointment was keen, and gave a sternness to his words; the feeling of desertion breaks forth in the pathetic repining, "foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head," while in the closing days of his ministry in Galilee he mingles upbraiding against its towns with warnings of Israel's rejection and of the admission of the Gentiles, towards whom his all-embracing, saddened heart was turning:—

"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted to heaven? Thou shalt be thrust down to hades; for if the mighty works which were done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."²

On another occasion he said that many would come from east and west and sit down at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of

heaven, while the sons of the kingdom would go forth into the outer darkness.

So the day that had risen with such fair promise on the first gentle preachings by the lake of Tiberias was overcast, and on the soul of Jesus there fell a deep, lonely sorrow. To add to the gloom, news reached him that John the Baptist had been put to death by Herod Antipas, an event in which, although the mission of Jesus was free from such rebellion as may have tinged John's, he could not but read his own possible fate. For the Pharisees, who were not grieved at the murder of John, were not likely to protect him if Herod laid hands upon him, and the people swerved to the lead of their rulers. The outlook betokened a danger which Jesus, who had yet much work before him that he would fain do, avoided by withdrawing with a faithful few to beyond the borders of Galilee, where, away from cavaliers and the fickle crowd, he might commune in quiet with his Father and ponder over his course for the future.

Much uncertainty hangs over his movements at this period; but, whatever they may have been, he at last reached the neighbourhood of Caesarea-Philippi, the most northerly town in Jewish territory. In the delightful spot where Herod the Great had raised a "beautiful temple of the whitest stone" to Augustus, Herod Philip had newly built the place which he called after his Roman master and himself, and it was near this that Jesus one day put a question to the disciples which revealed what course his ideas regarding his mission and himself were taking within his own mind. He asked them, "Who do men say that I am?" or, according to another account, applying to himself a favourite title borrowed from the book of Daniel, not as claiming divine nature, but call to human service, "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" They replied that some, the remorseful Antipas among them, said he was John the Baptist, who, in their belief, had risen from the dead; others,

¹ Matt. xi. 16, 17. ² *Ibid.* xi. 21-23.

that he was the prophet Elijah, whom Malachi had said would be sent "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Jehovah"; others, Jeremiah, or some other prophet. Making no comment on this, he then asked them, "But who say ye that I am?" when Simon answered him, "Thou art the Messiah," and Jesus, approving, said: "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jona, for flesh and blood revealed it not to thee, but my Father who is in heaven." That no excitement hindering and, perchance, frustrating his purpose might arise by public announcement of this, "he charged them that they should tell no man of him."

By what steps he had arrived at a belief in his own Messiahship we cannot know; maybe, like many large results to which men come, the progress was too slow and subtle for Jesus himself to trace, and we may only guess, with the rough outline of his career before us, that the growth of this idea was due to many causes, among which the following seem likely.

The withdrawal of the feather-headed people had thrown him the more within himself and the more upon his God, his trust in whom, and sense of oneness with whose will, never failed;¹ opposition to his teaching had made him the more sift it, only to convince him that no higher was needful or possible to men; the sense of power over the wills and disorders, whether in mind or body, of his fellows was deepened by his ministry of success with the despised and outcast; in the likeness of Israel's "suffering servant" drawn by the prophet whose words were oftenest on his lips—one "despised and rejected; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"—he traced his own career; and last, but by no means least, the question from the

Baptist, "Art thou the coming one?" had seemed to bring its own answer with it, and to resolve, once for all, hesitation into conviction.

Whatever views men held concerning the Messiah, they were in agreement that he would appear in Jerusalem, and thither Jesus resolved to repair, making his appeal to the nation in the person of the chief priests and elders, and of the crowds who would be gathered there during festival time. In disclosing this intention to his disciples, he did not shrink from telling them what forebodings filled him that an enterprise so bold as attacking the stronghold of priests and rabbis might cost him his life. So mournful a prediction stunned them. That he, in whom they with uplifted hearts had declared their belief as the "anointed of the Lord," should be maltreated and killed seemed impossible. They "understood not this saying, and were afraid to ask him," until Simon, foremost spokesman, said: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." To Jesus, through whose mind flashed the memory of his terrible struggle in the desert, Simon seemed, as it were, another tempter, and he rebuked him, calling him Satan and a stumbling-block, seeking the things desired by men, and not those in accord with the will of God.² Of course, the secret of their misunderstanding was in this—that, while he was intent upon the work to which he was called, not by descent of blood (for he was at pains, when in Jerusalem, to argue that the Messiah was no son of David³), but, by fitness and doing of the will of God, and not quailing before the sacrifice this might demand, they, vain dreamers, were speculating how he would distribute the high places among them in the kingdom which they thought he was about to set up, and wrangling with one another who should be the greatest! He, perceiving the thoughts of their greedy hearts, "called the twelve, and said unto them,

¹ Perchance, too, he shared the belief of the Jews in divine intimation through the *Bath Kol* (or *daughter of a voice*), by which, so they said, the Holy spoke to them under the second temple, when the *Urim* and *Thummim* were lost and the line of the prophets closed.

² Matt. xvi. 21-28.

³ Mark xii. 35-37.

If any man desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." And he took a little child and set him in the midst of them, and, when he lifted him in his arms, he said: "Whosoever will receive one of these little children in my name, receives me: and whosoever receives me, receives not me, but him that sent me." Enforcing the law of self-denial as the foundation of faithful service, he said:—

"Whosoever desires to follow after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever desires to save his life will lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life, for my sake and the Gospel's, will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his life? For what must a man give in exchange for his life? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall also the Son of man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.Verily, I say unto you that there are some of those standing here who will not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God already come with power."¹

We need not stay to surmise what course Jesus would have taken had all Jerusalem welcomed him as the Messiah, and falsified the sad presentiments of danger and death drawn from the temper of the Pharisees in Galilee, for he must have speculated on the bare chance of success; enough that he would not have made its plaudits the cry for an earthly throne, and thus given the lie to his sublime teaching concerning the kingdom of God. Yet he would have been something more than human never to have wondered and pondered over the future which lay beyond suffering and the grave, and here in the unravelling of his talks upon this matter we have a well-nigh impossible task. For they have come down to us so wound about with the crude notions of his misconceiving hearers, and the weird ideas current about the end of the world in the first century, that we can with no sureness say which are his words and which are not. Speaking broadly, he must have been in accord

with the belief of the Jews in the return of the souls of the righteous to earth, for in dying without living again what would become of the kingdom of God, of which earth, not some remote place above the clouds, home of Jehovah and the angels, was to be the purified seat? Banishing as foreign to the mind of Jesus his reported sayings about the signs ushering in the last day, and about his judgment of the nations, all "of the earth, earthly," there are too many passages left in the "Synoptics" to allow us to ignore the fact that he instilled into his disciples his belief that he would return to them; that, though he might lay down his life, he would take it again. When this might be was known to the Father only, in whose hands were "times and seasons"; enough for them, in view of such uncertainty, to make it their care to note the signs of the age, and their duty, like faithful servants, to watch with loins girt about and lamps burning as men who wait for their lord.

Vague as our knowledge of the precise ideas of Jesus on this matter must remain, the belief in his "second advent," as it is termed, was most vivid and all-absorbing among his followers.¹ The earlier epistles of the New Testament teem with proofs that the event of which they felt most sure, which no twisting of

¹ The belief in the second coming of Jesus to reign with the saints for a thousand years upon the earth, from which evil should then be banished, known as the Millennium (Lat. *mille*, a thousand, and *annus*, a year), passed into the Christian religion, and survives in more or less vigour among many to this day. The subject attracted men, burning with desire to peer into the future, yet forgetful that "the Spirit which is holy is reserved and deals in laws," to search the writings which seemed to hide the precious secret; and ever and anon the minds of people have been panic-stricken and progress has been checked by announcements from prophecy-mongers that the world would come to an end at such and such a time, and stating the year when Jesus would appear. The delusion will die out only when what Matthew Arnold calls the "immense misunderstanding of the Bible" is corrected, and the teaching of science about the earth's past and future accepted by Second-Adventists.

¹ Mark viii. 34-38; ix. 1.

words can explain as referring to a later time, and concerning which they and all who came after them were utterly mistaken, was the speedy return of the Master whose loss they so keenly mourned. The belief was at fever heat in the minds of Paul and other writers, and was harmful to the extent that it absorbed attention upon a shadowy future to the neglect of improvement of the present. For the early Christians, regarding the earth as soon to vanish away, gave their sole concern to, and set their affections upon, an unseen world which to them was the eternal. Believing that the present state of things might cease at any moment, they bestowed small care upon passing wants, and held lightly even the ties of home and kindred which might be snapped suddenly. The loss of property could be suffered without repining, and wrong pass unredressed by those to whom Jesus, "judge of quick and dead," would open the kingdom "prepared from the foundation of the world." Art and learning were vain compared to the knowledge "making wise unto salvation," and the heavens were watched, not for the glory of the sunlight and the stars, but that the chosen might catch the first glimpse of their coming Lord, whom they would be caught up in the air to meet, and so be ever with him.¹ Out of this illusion there grew a terrible misconception by Christians of their relation to the earth and human kind, which still too largely

separates reason and feeling, and sustains false divisions in our life. God's beautiful world, whose flowers and children's faces were so dear to Jesus, was called a "waste, howling wilderness," through which we are doomed to pass to a heavenly Canaan; the love of it and interest in its affairs were said to ill comport with setting the heart on things above, and to arouse the jealousy of God; life upon it was to be endured only as a preparation for eternal life elsewhere. All this is not only false, but wicked. The earth is no place of exile, but our fatherland, calling forth our reverence and our best service. Here, or nowhere, is our sphere of duty, where a zest and sacredness is given to work in aiding to clear away all that hinders the advance of man in everything that is of good report, and in the slaying of selfishness—the root of all that chokes the growth of charity. And to play well our part in this great struggle, doing nought to retard the issue, is a nobler task than to pine for a land of dreamless ease, where no spur is given to effort, and to pass our days fretfully wondering what is to become of our poor selves. 'Tis the—

"Glory of virtue to fight, to struggle, to right
the wrong—
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats
of the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a
summer sky;
Give her the wages of going on and not to
die."¹

IX.—JESUS IN JERUSALEM

ON returning to Galilee, Jesus made a short stay at Capernaum, but did not resume his public teaching there. The news of his intended visit to Jerusalem

spread, however, in the neighbourhood, and when he set out on that most eventful journey a goodly number, among whom were a few faithful women,

¹ Tennyson's *Wages*.

¹ Thess. iv. 13-16; v. 1, 2; etc.

followed him. Moreover, the season for keeping the Passover was drawing nigh, and many were wending their way to the city for that purpose. At various parts of the route he met with the Pharisees, who attacked him with catch-questions, and otherwise sought to draw him into debate ; but we may turn from these to incidents of wider interest—stories of enduring fragrance. One day, as he tarried in a house, some parents brought their children that they might receive, after Jewish custom, a rabbi's blessing, when the disciples, perhaps filled with overweening sense of their master's importance, and therefore of their own, pushed them aside. "But when Jesus saw this he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, forbid them not ; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever will not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms and blessed, putting his hands on them."

Another time one came to him and said :—

" Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have everlasting life ? And Jesus said unto him, Why askest thou me concerning the good ? One is good." (Or as another account has it, " Why callest thou me good ? none is good but one, God.") " But if thou desirest to enter into life, keep the commandments. Which ? says he. And Jesus said, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour the father and the mother, and Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man says unto him, All these I kept ; what lack I yet ? Jesus said unto him, If thou desirest to be perfect, go sell thy goods and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come follow me. But when the young man heard he went away sorry ; for he had great possessions. And Jesus said unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you that a rich man will hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for a rich man into the kingdom of heaven. And when they heard they were exceedingly astonished, saying, Who then can be saved ? But Jesus looked upon and said unto them, With men this is impossible ; but with God all things are possible."

¹ Matt. xix. 16-26.

Jesus and his companions had passed by way of Peræa, on the east of the Jordan, which river they recrossed at the ford of Bethabara, near the plain where grew "the palm trees by the water, the rose plants which are in Jericho." This place, celebrated in Jewish history as the first to yield to the attack of the "sons of Israel" on the invasion of Canaan, was an important town, and the centre of traffic in balsam, which was not only of great value both as a perfume and a medicine, but the source of much revenue to the Romans. Jericho is now a village of black tents and mud huts. As it was needful to rest here before climbing the steep and rugged gorge which led to Jerusalem, Jesus chose to become the guest of a Jew named Zacchæus, chief of the tax-collectors there. He was a little man, and, being unable to see over the heads of the crowd that surged around Jesus, "ran on before" and climbed a sycamore tree, to catch a glimpse of him. As Jesus passed near the tree he saw Zacchæus, and bade him come down that he might receive him into his house.

And he made haste and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a sinner. And Zacchæus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor ; and if I took aught from any one by false accusation, I pay fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, inasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham, for the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.¹

On the next day Jesus ascended the dreary path that led to the mountain village of Bethany, which was about two miles from Jerusalem, and there he abode in the house of friends to whom he was already known, or whose acquaintance, in the free manners of the East, he then made, and for whom he conceived an abiding love, which caused him often to return among them after the bickerings and vexations of his public encounters in Jerusalem.

¹ Luke xix. 7-10.

The first view of that place is featureless and unpleasing from every other side than the approach from Bethany over the mountain of Olives, from the summit of which are seen at a glance the great valleys which cut it off from the surrounding tableland. The city itself spread before them, with its walls and turrets, its palaces and groups of houses—for Eastern cities have no well-planned streets; above all, the temple, whose golden-plated and spiked roof shone as a dazzling crown from Mount Moriah, the valley between which and the opposite hill of Zion, whercon towered Herod's place, was spanned by a bridge. The site of many of its noted buildings is matter of great doubt, for the city, which has borne the brunt of a score sieges, and been twice razed to the ground, is choked with mounds of rubbish many feet in depth, on which the present Jerusalem is built.

The square-shaped platform of rock on which the temple stood had been levelled at great cost and enlarged by Herod. The outermost and largest enclosure was the Court of the Gentiles, upon which he had lavished taste and expense. It was paved with stones of various colours, double and treble rows of marble pillars ran round it, forming aisles or halls from which many noble gates led to the city and outskirts, that facing the Mount of Olives being called Solomon's porch. The colonnades round this court were places of public resort; there the rabbis taught, and there Jesus addressed the people. There, too, a busy traffic, with its deafening noises, the shouting of men and the lowing of cattle, was carried on by traders in sheep, oxen, lambs, and kids, or, for those who were too poor to offer these, in doves, for the sacrifices; by sellers of oil, incense, and other needful things for the temple, and by money-dealers who exchanged the current foreign coin for the sacred shekel, in which alone the temple tax could be paid.

In an angle of this Court of the Gentiles there was a raised terrace on

which were notices, in Greek and Latin, forbidding any but Jews to pass nearer under pain of death. Within this second enclosure was the Court of Women, approached by the Beautiful Gate, and containing the treasury, into which the temple-gifts were dropped by rich and poor; also the Court of Priests, with the laver and a huge altar of unhewn stones, and, in cloisters round the walls, places for stores and other purposes, and a synagogue where the Sanhedrin met. Twelve steps above these, in "the pupil of the eye," stood the temple itself, as says the Talmud, "The world is the eye, the ocean is the white of the eye; the pupil is Jerusalem, and the image in the pupil is the sanctuary." The erection of sacred buildings to face the east is a relic of sun worship, and another proof of the survival of pagan customs among both Jews and Christians; so looked the Temple, to which allusion is thus made in the Talmud:—

"Our fathers who were in this place
Turned their backs upon the temple,
And their faces towards the east,
And worshipped the sun eastward;
But we unto Jehovah,
To Jehovah are our eyes."

It was a flat-roofed building of white marble, and divided, like the "tabernacle" and the temples before it, into two parts separated by a curtain: the Holy, wherein stood the golden candlestick, table, and altar; and the Holy of Holies, imageless, bereft of cherubim and ark, since the terrible destruction under Nebuchadrezzar. Jerusalem was a city of priests; Josephus reckoned their number at twenty thousand, besides whom were the Levites. It was the headquarters of the rabbis; of the Pharisees sweeping by with their phylacteries and deep-fringed garments; while jostling these were white-robed Essenes, Roman soldiers, gay courtiers—a motley crowd, swelled at festival seasons by so many pilgrims that the city could not contain them, wherefore they pitched their tents and green booths outside its walls, or found lodging in the surrounding villages.

Our interest nowadays in the numerous and unceasing rites and services of the Jewish temple is solely in their relation to the customs and modes of worship of men in bygone ages, the tracing of which is beyond the purpose of this book. Here allusion is made to them only to point out how the interest of everyone in and about Jerusalem was bound up in maintaining them; for the crowd of priests and Levites, who spent years in learning their duties, were supported by the temple-tax and free will offerings, while the influx of pilgrims from time to time, and the supply of numberless things, as cattle, salt, wood, oil, etc., for the temple service, were unfailing sources of gain to the inhabitants. How daring and well-nigh hopeless then was the task of any man the effect of whose teaching was to show the needlessness of all this outward and costly service; for if religion was not in this, but in self-denying service of man for men, and the acceptable worship of God one of the spirit, the priests were not wanted, the temple flame might be put out, the daily sacrifice might be stayed, its whirling smoke no longer darken the air, and the mob of chaffering, cheating tradesmen turn their hands to honest work. *

As Jesus neared the city, the excitement of his followers became intense; they resolved to make his entry one of triumph, and, either with or without his consent, procured an ass on which he should ride through the gates. Their unsought tribute was not unwelcome to him, for, like all reformers, his hope of success lay among the masses; so mounting the ass (an animal ridden by persons of note in the East, and, in contrast to the horse, which was used only in war, an emblem of peace), he rode amid the plaudits and hosannas of the crowd.

"Many spread their garments in the way and others branches, having cut them out of the fields. And those going before and those following cried:

'Hosanna!
Bless him that comes in the name of the
Lord!
Bless the coming kingdom of our father
David!
Hosanna in the highest!'"

Familiar as the people of Jerusalem were with the shouts and singing of pilgrim-bands as they approached the sacred, dazzling shrine, the entry of Jesus and his followers set them agape and asking what it all meant: "All the city was moved saying, 'Who is this?' and the multitude said, 'This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.'"

Passing through the Sheep-gate, the procession stopped not till the temple courts were reached, and there Jesus dismounted and mingled with the crowd. If he had come yearly from Nazareth to keep the feasts, the scene was not strange to him; but, whether he had or not, he entered upon it now in a very different mood and character—a *sceptic*, as he would now be called, one who had by *thinking* cut himself adrift from the religion of his people—yet all aglow with reverence and pious zeal. The trafficking at the very foot of the "Holy of Holies" shocked him, its noisy clatter grated on his ear and so irritated him that without ado he pushed his way helter-skelter among the traders and money-changers, overturned their stalls and tables, and with a whip, perhaps made from small cords lying scattered on the pavement, drove them out, saying: "Is it not written, My house shall be called an house of prayer for all the nations? but ye have made it a den of robbers!" So daring an act, successful in the suddenness of its surprise and in the support doubtless accorded it by many Jews shocked, like Jesus, at the noise and batur in the holy place, was an attack upon the temple-system itself, and could not fail to direct towards its author the attention and displeasure of priests and Pharisees.

The memory of bickerings and debates between these men and Jesus, and the

cruelties, even unto death, which he suffered at their hands, were uppermost in the minds of his disciples, and scarce a word is given to the matter of his addresses in the temple courts. That these were in keeping with his unwavering conviction that the kingdom of which he believed himself the "anointed" herald was a kingdom of the spirit there can be no doubt. But the subject is dismissed in the bare record that "in the daytime he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged at the mount that is called the Mount of Olives. And all the people were coming early in the morning to him in the temple to hear him."¹

Soon after his attack upon the traders the rulers of the Sanhedrin came forward to ask by what authority he acted, and who gave it him. With ready skill he said to them: "I also will ask you one question, which, if ye tell me, I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?" Now, Jesus had described John to his disciples and the multitude as the Elias who had come before him, the Messiah, and if, therefore, the chief priests and elders had replied that the baptism of John was from heaven, he would have claimed to be the "coming one" whom John had preached; while, on the other hand, if they said that the baptism of John was from earth, the multitude, who believed that he was a prophet, would have been enraged against them. So they simply said, "We know not," and Jesus answered them, "Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things," following up his reply by a parable warning them of the fate of the Jews: "A man had two children: he came to the first and said, Child, go work to-day in the vineyard. But he answered and said, I will not; afterwards he repented and went. And he came to the other and spake in the same manner. And he answered and said, Yea, sir, and

went not. Which of the two did the will of the father? They say the first. Jesus says unto them, Verily I say unto you, the publicans and harlots go before you into the kingdom of God. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not, but the publicans and harlots believed him; and when ye saw it, ye repented not afterwards so as to believe him."²

Although Jesus, at the outset of his work in Jerusalem, thus attacked the classes whose support he felt he could never command, they did not resent the onslaught by acts of violence. Once or twice the hot-headed among them would, in accordance with Jewish law, have stoned him, had they not feared the multitude, among whom he at first secured no mean following, and who revered him as a prophet; but the weapons they mostly used were cunning and craft. How well he parried these is shown on an occasion when, in tones of flattery, they sought his opinion on the vexed question of paying taxes to the foreigner. "Rabbi," said they, "we know that thou art true and teachest the way of God in truth, and carest for no one: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what thinkest thou, is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?" Jesus saw through their designs. Had he said "no," he would at once have been seized as a rebel; had he said "yes," he would have forfeited the support of the people. "Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?" he said; "show me the tribute money." And they brought unto him a denarius,² a Roman coin bearing the name and head of the emperor, and representing the tribute money, about sevenpence three-farthings, payable by each Jew to him. And Jesus says unto them, "Whose is this image and superscription?" They say "Cæsar's." Then says he unto them, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto

¹ Luke xxi. 37, 38.

² Matt. xxi. 23-32.

² This word is still preserved in our £ s. d.

God the things that are God's." And when they heard they marvelled, and left him and went away.¹

One day some remarks that he had made on the resurrection had attracted the notice of the Sadducees, rarely his hearers, and they sought to confute him by citing the case of a woman who had had seven husbands, asking him whose wife she would be in the resurrection. Jesus replied that their denial of this doctrine rested on a misreading of the Scriptures and an underrating of Almighty power. "For when they shall rise from the dead they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven." And as proving that the dead are raised, "Did ye not read in the book of Moses in the bush passage, how God spake unto him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'?" He is not the God of dead, but of living. Ye do greatly err.² That is, if God called himself the God of the patriarchs hundreds of years after they were dead, it must be inferred that they are not dead for ever, but will return from the land of shades and walk the earth in their bodies, and, moreover, includes the larger fact of his close and abiding relation with living men. This reasoning seems to have silenced the Sadducees, who were, however, in the right, for the facts of science confirm their belief that dead bodies decay, and, mingling with the common dust of the globe of whose particles they consist, become one with it to nourish succeeding forms of life born of the all-quickening earth, the

"stuff" of which, as we may call it, being neither added to nor lessened, is thus used over and over again.

The record turns from these stories of his triumph in debate with Pharisee and Sadducee to exhibit him as exalting the commandment of love to God and one's neighbour, than which "there is none greater," conveying a reproof they do well to take to heart who maintain the needfulness of believing doctrines which no words of his sanction, and which, were he among us now, he would condemn and oppose, as making "the word of God of none effect."

"And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that he answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God from all thy heart, and from all thy soul, and from all thy mind, and from all thy strength. The second is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou saidst of a truth that there is one, and there is none other but he; and to love him from all the heart, and from all the understanding, and from all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all the whole burnt-offerings and the sacrifices. And when Jesus saw him that he answered intelligently, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no one durst question him any more."³

¹ Matt. xxii. 16-22. ² *Ibid.* xxvii. 23-32.

³ Mark xii. 28-34.

X.—HIS ARREST, TRIAL, AND CRUCIFIXION

So the days passed in teaching the multitude, in warning them against lip service in religion, and in sharp debate with those against whose example Jesus cautioned his listeners,¹ and who, as they one after another advanced with questions, retired foiled and silenced. But they retired to plot how best they might silence him, and, to accomplish this, Pharisee and Sadducee laid aside their common quarrel.

As the records tell us, when the day was over, Jesus passed to some retreat from the "strife of tongues" and the reach of the factions which, under cover of the darkness, might have harmed him, spending the night either among the fig and olive groves of Olivet or at Bethany, where, in the society of the two sisters, Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus, he forgot his troubles. He was no braggart, courting a death which none in the flush and flower of life may think of without a shudder. Life was his, not to throw wildly away, yet not to cling to when its work was done.

And it was nearly done. The quick and large increase of faithful disciples, which could alone foil and disarm the priests and scribes, had not come, the zeal aroused by his entry had died away, the story of his mission in Galilee repeated itself in Judæa, and the bitter sorrow of disappointment breaks out in such words as these: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killst the prophets and stonest them who have been sent unto her, how often did I desire to gather thy children as a hen gathers her chickens under the wings, and ye desired not!" And in these words too, when the thought o' the impending doom of the city, where religion was a traffic, drew tears from

him as he looked upon it from the slopes of Olivet: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."²

It is most doubtful whether Jesus had any intercourse with either Samaritans or Gentiles during his brief public life; but the rejection of his mission by his own people had caused him to look to the heathen as the supplacers of Israel, and in the parable of the "good Samaritan" he portrays the hated Cuthean as showing kindness to a robbed and wounded Jew which was denied him by both priest and Levite. As a Jew, believing that to Jews the "gospel of the kingdom" must be *first* proclaimed, he had confined his teaching to them, and in sending out his disciples he instructed them to act likewise; but he shared the larger belief of the nobler prophets of old, that the Gentiles would be brought into the one fold. Moreover, it was impossible that the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man which Jesus proclaimed could be narrowed to one zone or people. A religion the essence of which was love of God, manifest by love of man, was destined to be world-wide and all-embracing, and its preacher, in eating with outcasts and doing deeds of mercy on the sabbath, had already broken down the "middle wall of partition,"..... "creating the two into himself."

In such parables as that of the "two sons," already quoted, and of the "marriage of the king's son,"³ where the chosen guests frame all kind of excuses to avoid coming to the feast, so that the wrathful king at last sends his servants to gather in from the highways and call to the feast whoever they might find, he proclaims the admission of the Gentiles;

¹ Matt. xxiii. 3.

² Luke xix. 42.

³ Matt. xxii. 1-14.

while in that of the "wicked husbandmen" he hints at the fate of those who had slain the prophets, and would lay hands on the Messiah. "Therefore say I unto you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And when the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parables, they knew that he spoke of them."¹

In plainer words than parables, he whose sweetness and gentleness had given place to bitterness at the sight of hypocrisy and swagger poured forth invective upon those "who did all their works to be seen by men: for they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the fringes, and love the chief place at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the salutations in the markets, and to be called by men, Rabbi.".....

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!² for ye shut the kingdom of heaven before men; for ye neither go in, nor suffer those that are entered to go in.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he becomes such, ye make him a son of hell twofold more than yourselves.....

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of the mint and the anise and the cummin, and have left the weightier matters of the law, the judgment, the mercy, and the faith: these ought ye to have done, and not leave those undone. Blind guides, who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but within are full of dead bones and every uncleanness. So also ye appear outwardly righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and garnish the tombs of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been their partners in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye witness against yourselves, that ye are sons of them who killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Serpents, brood of vipers, how can ye escape the judgment of hell?³

¹ Matt. xxi. 33 43.

² Literally *actors*, as the Greek *hypokritai* means.

³ Matt. xxiii. *passim*.

These biting and terrible words burnt as hot iron into the souls of those whom he thus described, but they could scarcely afford an excuse for using violence; and, mayhap, were but the retort to strong words from his opponents. But when, mingling his dislike of all connected with the temple with his dreams of a purer faith whose temple should be co-extensive with the earth, he said, in figure of speech that so fitly expressed his meaning, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands," he gave his foes, ever on the alert to trip him, the pretext they wanted, and these words of "heresy" and "blasphemy," as they were deemed, formed the chief count in the charge against him, and were flung scoffingly in his teeth as he hung a-dying.

The seizure of Jesus appears to have been determined upon at a meeting of the Sanhedrin held on the Tuesday evening before the passover (the celebration of which began on the Thursday evening, the fourteenth of the Jewish month Nisan, the time of the first full moon in spring), at the house of the high-priest Caiaphas. "Lest there was an uproar among the people" at the festival time through any attempt to arrest him in public, and so the feeling wrought to high excitement at that season, flame out in tumult, perhaps rebellion, despite all that the Sanhedrin might do, they decided to postpone action till after the passover, when the pilgrims had dispersed, and then to lay hold of Jesus quietly. But the carrying out of their designs against him was hastened by aid from a quarter whence they least expected it.

It is easy for us, in the quiet of our lives, touched, as we cannot fail to be, by the tale of the patience of Jesus under suffering and of the horrible death he died, to blame these men for the course which they took, and to wonder how the Jews could turn deaf ear to so lovable and earnest a prophet. But the

account which has been given of their ideas concerning a Messiah show how utterly he failed to answer to these, giving no further proof in miracle or sign of a divine mission, and content to teach, argue, reprove, and denounce, like the holy men of old, whose spirit he shared with added measure. We should, indeed, in the light of these facts, wonder if they, limited in their notions and puffed up with vain hopes, had seen in him other than a Jew of extreme, perverted, mystical, and unworkable ideas, who, angered at their refusal to welcome him, a man of Galilean manners and brogue, but claiming hearing as their Messiah, at last violently attacked the religion whose laws about sabbaths and cleansing had been broken, and insulted their sacred shrine. The law which they regarded as divine was clear as to their duty concerning such an one; it was written "Thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die."¹

On the evening of Thursday, the fourteenth of Nisan, Jesus and his twelve disciples assembled under the roof of some secret or open follower in Jerusalem to eat the passover together.

At this feast the chief dish in every house was a lamb which had been declared free from blemish by the priests, with whom were left its fat and blood for sacrifice,² and which was roasted whole, eaten with bread, bitter herbs and fruits, and washed down with red wine. Prayers and thanksgiving (for the feast in its later meaning was one of rejoicing in memory of Israel's deliverance from the bondage in Egypt) were offered, Psalms cxiii.-cxviii. were sung as the wine-cup went round, and the meal closed with strains of praise. But amid this little company of thirteen in that unknown upper room joy was not a guest; a heavy gloom weighed on the heart of the Master; one among the number betrayed signs betokening a mind ill at ease, and the quick eye of Jesus saw these, yet he strove not to impart the gloom to his

friends, and in the old, sweet manner spoke now to one, now to another. "With longing," he said, "I longed to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you that I will not any more eat it until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God."³ Then he did a beautiful and touching thing, the poetry of which has been well-nigh stifled out by the tedious and harmful debates to which it has given rise among Christian sects, but which we may easily see suggested itself at the time to a mind like that of Jesus, so rich in its store of symbols and its boundless wealth of illustration. Offering the usual blessing, he took a cake of bread, broke it into fragments, and as he gave a piece to each the act seemed to prefigure a swift-coming fate, for he said, "Eat; this is my body which is broken for you." Then he filled the cup with wine, and, after thanksgiving, drank of it and passed it round, saying, "This is my blood of the covenant, shed for many."⁴ "Verily I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."⁵

It was their last act together, and abode in the memories of the disciples as the sacred words of the dead. When, after their faithless desertion of him in the moment of peril, they rallied together and talked over what he had said, the unleavened bread and the red wine had fuller meaning for them, and that simple fare became a solemn rite. To this day, wherever men and women gather together to repeat it, in remembrance of the sacrifice of a noble life for the truth, they do well so long as it becomes no other to them than an example to follow, and is not degraded into a rite in which virtue is believed to dwell. For, shocking to say, millions of Christian people to this day are taught that Jesus by a miracle changed the bread and the wine into

¹ Dent. xiii. 10; cf. 1-5 and ch. xviii. 20.

² See page 37.

³ Luke xxii. 15. ⁴ *Ibid.* xxii. 19.

⁵ Mark xiv. 25. The enjoyment of the world to come is figuratively spoken of in Rabbinic writings as the *banquet*. Cf. *P. Aboth*, p. 74 (notes on iii. 25).

his own body and blood ! and that in some occult way priests have power from him to change the wafer and wine used during the "mass," as the service connected with this rite is called among Roman Catholics, so that the very body and blood of Christ take their place,¹ and as a matter of course the rite is invested with an awful importance and made a powerful instrument in the hands of the clergy. In former times it was used as an "ordeal," or one of the many tests of the guilt or innocence of accused persons, it being held that, when taken by the guilty, divine punishment quickly followed the impious act, but that no harm resulted where the accused was innocent.

Near midnight, when the supper was ended, Jesus and the twelve left the city and passed through the valley of Kidron to the foot of the Mount of Olives. As they journeyed, one of the number slunk away under cover of the darkness. This was Judas of Kerioth (called Judas Iscariot in the gospels), bound on his errand to carry out a bargain he had made, perhaps the day before, with the Sanhedrin to show the temple guard the place where Jesus might be surprised and seized.

What led this man to so shameful a deed it is not possible to say, for, greedy of nature as he seems to have been, the sum for which he is said to have bargained to do it, thirty silver shekels, or barely four pounds in English money, was too paltry. Enough that he had sought the chief priests, and that they had gladly accepted his offer to betray the Master, and so hasten an event which they had intended deferring until after the feast.

Meanwhile, Jesus went on his way with the eleven till they reached a grove or garden near Olivet, called Gethsemane, or the "oil-press," as a not unfit resting-place at an hour when it might be too late

to reach Bethany, on the route to which it lay. There Jesus, from whose eyes looming trouble at the stealthy act of Judas had driven sleep, bidding the other disciples remain while he retired to pray, took Peter, James, and John, "and began to be sorrowful and cast down. Then says he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; abide here and watch with me. And he went forward a little and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him, and said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt."

For Jesus, completely submissive, as this prayer denotes, and fearless withal, was in the prime of manhood, and quailed, as men brave and tender as he have quailed before and since, at the thought of taking "from death's hand the cup that we all must take," and leaving dear earth, scene of toils and joys and friendly faces; the more painfully so as he felt that he would die misunderstood by those whom he desired to save. Returning to the three, "he found them sleeping, for their eyes were weary," when suddenly the flame of burning torches amidst the trees dazzled their eyes, and a band of armed men, belonging to the temple guard, and therefore under the control of the priests, appeared, headed by Judas. That they might know which was Jesus, the traitor went up and kissed him as signal, whereupon hands were laid on him. One of the disciples who had a sword strove to defend him, and in the scuffle wounded one of the high-priest's men; but Jesus, bidding him sheath his sword, surrendered without resistance, quietly saying to his captors, "Ye come out, as against a robber, with swords and staves to take me; I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye did not lay hold of me!" His disciples, craven-hearted, and careful only to save their lives, "forsook him and fled," and Jesus, deserted by the eleven and betrayed by the twelfth, was

¹ See quotations from Frazer's *Golden Bough* in the author's *Pioneers of Evolution*, p. 34 (Rationalist Press Association edition).

a lonely prisoner in the hands of his enemies.

They lost no time, but marched him in the dead of night to the palace of Caiaphas, where such members of the Sanhedrin as could be found were assembled, and with them witnesses able, falsely or otherwise, to depose to certain "blasphemous" words uttered by Jesus. In the absence of his disciples (for Peter, who had slunk into the court-yard in the darkness to learn how things were going on, was accused by a servant girl of being a follower of the Nazarene, and had slipped away after denying all knowledge of Jesus), we have no trustworthy account of the proceedings within the council-chamber, and, moreover, our knowledge is scanty concerning the mode of conducting trials by the Sanhedrin.¹ But the course taken seems to have been that of summoning the witnesses to give evidence in support of the charge against Jesus as a false prophet and "corrupter" of religion; and, after hearing several whose testimony "agreed not together," two came forward to declare that they had heard him say, "I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will raise up another made without hands," which was, of course, not taken as a figure of speech, but seized on as signifying impious intent.

Caiaphas then stood up in the midst and asked Jesus if he had any answer to

make to the charge; "but he held his peace," for what could words avail where, as he felt sure, the judges had resolved beforehand upon their verdict? Their minds were made up; let them do their worst. He could die but once, and in such a dying was secured the life of the truth to which he had witnessed; acquittal could be had only at the cost of denying all that in life he accounted dear. But Caiaphas, anxious that Jesus should by some word of his own justify the intended sentence, said solemnly: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou art the Messiah, the Son of God." Then Jesus broke silence, answering him, "Thou hast said it," and thereupon the high priest—in sign of horror at an admission which to him was blasphemy—"rent his clothes," saying, "He blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye heard the blasphemy. What think ye?" They answered and said, "He is guilty of death."¹

Thus was a short and hurried trial, in which only the bare forms of justice were respected, ended against the unbenefended Jesus in the darkness of that passover night, and the members of the Sanhedrin, cold and weary, after agreeing to meet early in the morning and complete what in haste had been left unsettled, dispersed to their homes. Jesus was placed in the charge of mocking and insulting guards.

At dawn of day the Sanhedrin reassembled, chiefly to discuss how best to present the charge against him before the Roman governor, and thus ensure his not escaping the meshes of the Imperial law, for they had no power to carry out the sentence which they had pronounced. They artfully and unjustly decided to ensure his conviction by charging him with sedition, on the ground that his claim to the Messiahship involved a claim to kingship over the Jews, therefore casting off the rule of Rome. So he was marched to the

¹ Under the title of *The Trial of Jesus* an eminent criminal lawyer, Signor Giovanni Rosadi, has recently issued a treatise on the legal and political aspects of that event (Eng. trans. published by Hutchinson & Co., 1905). He follows the proceedings in detail, but has to admit "that there are no historical *data* affording the means of reconstructing the judicial organisation of the Hebrews at the time of these events." However, he arrives at the conclusion that the sentence, judged by Jewish and Roman law, was illegal. Such an inquiry, interesting to those who see in Jesus only a human being on his trial for certain offences, must awaken strange reflections in those who regard that trial, and all which followed it, as a part of the scheme of redemption formulated in the "councils of the Trinity."

¹ Matt. xxvi. 59-66.

“prætorium,” the famous palace of Herod, a gloomy building without, but all gaiety and luxury within, and now occupied by the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, who, according to his duty, had come from his favourite seat, Cæsarea, with a body of soldiers to maintain order and suppress any tumults that might arise among the excited Jews during the great feast.

The proceedings took place in an open court before the palace, called in the Hebrew “Gabbatha,” or “the pavement,” where stood the chair of state, from which judgment was delivered in the hearing of the people, and where Pilate now seated himself to listen to the Sanhedrin and note their prisoner.

The part played by him in this business is not easy to discover, for, according to the Gospels, he was unwilling to deal with the case as hastily and severely as the Jewish rulers urged. To him Jesus appeared a harmless enthusiast, whose head had been somewhat turned by the flattery of rustics, and who had got into trouble with the heads of his nation over matters for which Pilate had small regard, rather contempt. As he surveyed the poor Galilean, he may have smiled at the thought of such an one claiming a kingship and heading a rebellion, the more so because, if he were a Messiah commanding himself to the Jews, they would not have made that claim an indictment against him. The Romans were tolerant of all religions; one god more or less in their Pantheon mattered little, and they allowed the Jews, as these passover feasts and temple-services show, freedom in their worship, so long as it was not made a pretext or an engine for revolt; indeed, the emperor himself did honour to their religion and assigned a share of the taxes to be applied towards maintaining its splendour in Jerusalem.

At the same time, Pilate ran the risk of losing place and favour if he winked at any movement which threatened mischief, and, after hearing the charge of sedition against Jesus, he asked him if he

was “king of the Jews”; but it would appear that “he answered him not even a word, so that the governor marvelled greatly.”¹

Puzzled and withal vexed at what seemed to him “much ado about nothing,” he was inclined to inflict a light punishment and let Jesus go, catching at a practice common at pass-over time, of setting free some prisoner chosen by the Jews. But the chief priests and elders, fearful that their victim might after all escape them, moved the multitude to clamour with them for the release of one Jesus Bar-Abbas, who appears to have been in favour with them as the hero of some tumult, perhaps against the Romans.

Pilate, having thus committed himself, was compelled to yield, and then, asking the crowd, “What then will ye that I should do with him whom ye call the king of the Jews?” was answered by shouts of “Crucify him,” thus demanding that he should be put to the most degrading death that the Romans inflicted, the death of the vilest criminals. And the cry rose louder and louder from the surging crowd, so that Pilate, glad at last to be quit of the affair, and having at heart a pagan’s contempt for human life, “gave sentence that it should be as they asked.”²

So Jesus was delivered to the soldiers to be stripped and scourged with leathern thongs tipped with bone or metal, according to the brutal custom adopted towards the condemned, and to this terrible pain succeeded mocking tortures; a reed was thrust into his hand as sceptre, prickly twigs were wound into a crown and forced upon his head, and an old scarlet cloak was thrown over him, while the impudent ruffians saluted him in jeering homage as “King of the Jews.”

The sentence—and well it was so rather than such agony should be endured by him who had never harmed a creature of God, but made life sunnier for the desolate and outcast—was carried out as

¹ Matt. xxvi. 14.

² Luke xxiii. 24.

soon as things could be made ready. In a short time Jesus was led through Jerusalem to a hill called, perhaps from its bald rounded top, Golgotha,¹ that is "a skull," situate outside the city gates. The exact site is unknown. Before this crownless king of men there went a herald proclaiming his offence, while the prisoner himself struggled under the weight of a beam of the cross on which he was to die; but, his strength failing by the way, the soldiers laid hold of a man named Simon, coming cityward, "and him they compelled to bear his cross."

That upon which Jesus suffered was probably + shaped (the common Roman form known as the *crux immissa*). To this the body, stripped of clothes, which were divided among the soldiers, was nailed and bound, nails being driven through the hands and feet, which latter, for the cross was not so high as commonly depicted, nearly touched the ground. Over the culprit's head a board was affixed, stating the crime for which he suffered. Thus, crucified between two thieves who were sentenced to a like death, and guarded by sentries, Jesus hung, exposed not only to the sun's burning glare on that Friday morning, and suffering the cruellest anguish in thirst² and ebbing blood and strained limbs, but the object of the taillery and taunts of the brutal crowd that then, as now, gloated over spectacles of human agony. Over his head was affixed a mocking notice written in Latin, Greek, and Aramaic, "The King of the Jews."

The scene around his cross is thus described in the simple words of the "Gospel according to Mark":—

"And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads and saying, Aha, thou that destroyest the temple

and buildest it in three days, save thyself by coming down from the cross. In like manner also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others, himself he cannot save; the Messiah, the King of Israel, let him come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reproached him."³

The disciples were still in hiding; of all that throng that had welcomed the Master's incoming to Jerusalem with hosannas and waving branches only a few faithful women, who had followed him from Galilee, were "looking on afar off beholding these things." Whether Jesus uttered or not the broken sentences of trust in and submission to his Father and of forgiveness of his foes, which are recorded in the Gospels, no one can say with sureness, for the common sources of knowledge altogether fail us here; enough that the words are in accord with all we can learn of a life whose loveliness and faithfulness were undimmed in death.

The time during which the crucified lingered depended much on their strength of endurance; in the case of Jesus death came in mercy to the poor worn-out and finely-strung frame after about six hours of agony; as the end neared some kindly bystander moistened the parched lips with a sponge dipped in the sour drink of the Roman soldiers; a few minutes afterwards Jesus uttered a cry of pain, and then all was over.

As a rule, the Romans denied burial to the crucified, leaving the corpse to rot upon the cross, or to be devoured by beasts and birds of prey; but they had relaxed this law in favour of the Jews, whose code required that the body of a man hanged should "not remain all night upon the tree."⁴ This there was

¹ *Calvaria*, from *calva*, "bald-scalp," is the Latin form of this word.

² He is said to have sipped and rejected the drink, frankincense in wine, which the compassion of the ladies of Jerusalem provided for the condemned to stupefy them.

³ Ch. xv. 29-32. In my quotations from the New Testament throughout this book the translation by Dr. Davidson, based upon the text of von Tischendorf, has been for the most part adopted.

⁴ Deut. xxi. 23.

now special anxiety to obey in view of the nearness of the sabbath, that the day might not be desiled by the repulsive sight on Golgotha. In the case of Jesus, a rich man named Joseph of Arimathea, who is said to have been a member of the Sanhedrin, although not of the number who tried him, and who, at least, must have had keen sympathy with his teaching, being one that "waited for the kingdom of God," went to Pilate and boldly begged the body, that he might give it more worthy burial than it would have if left to the Jews to inter. On being assured that Jesus was really dead, Pilate, perchance bribed thereto, assented; whereupon Joseph had the corpse taken down from the cross, perhaps in sight of the women weeping, and borne to a tomb which he had hewn for himself in the rocks near at hand, closing the entrance by a great stone to guard the remains from prowling beasts of prey.

The spot where Jesus was thus buried is unknown, but upon the site marked by tradition there stands, filled with sham reliques and tricked out with gewgaws, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, within the walls of which, where all sweet and gentle influences should rule, Armenian, Greek, Latin, and other sects that "profess and call themselves Christians," scowl and wrangle, and are kept from flying at one another's throats only by the presence of Mohammedan soldiers.

In the rapid execution of their plans and the flight of his most trusted friends, the priests and scribes had some warrant for thinking that, beyond the gossip to which the event gave rise, the last had been heard of Jesus. These purblind men, who had compassed his death as a blasphemer, failed to see that in yielding himself without effort at defence or escape, he had willed to die for quite another thing, thereby exalting the cross into the sublimest symbol of self-surrender, at whatever cost, to the will of

God, and abiding in larger form than he himself had dreamed, as one of the holiest and tenderest influences of all time.

When the immediate excitement was over, the disciples, of whose whereabouts in the meanwhile we have no knowledge, ventured to show themselves in Jerusalem, where they stood in little danger of rough treatment from the rulers, by whom they were regarded as misguided but harmless men. They were careful to manifest zeal in obeying the law and frequenting the temple; indeed, the only feature that marked them off from other Jews was their belief in Jesus as the speedy-returning Messiah. Had the future of his teaching depended on this "sect of the Nazarenes," as we find them afterwards scornfully called,¹ it would merely have fostered party feeling among the already divided nation. For the disciples worked in the old narrow grooves, resisting, even with persecution unto death, the efforts of larger minds to admit the Gentiles into fellowship without insisting on their compliance with Jewish rites and ceremonies. But in the end the freer view prevailed.

Among those who abetted violent deeds was a man destined to become the chief agent in converting the heathen to what he conceived to be "the faith as it is in Jesus." Of strong and subtle intellect and passionate heart, Paul, after much thought upon the matters which divided the community, joined the liberal side, and applied his fine reasoning powers to the skilful construction of a system designed to show that the old and limited "covenant" from Sinai was annulled by a new and limitless covenant sealed upon the cross. The zeal with which he had "consented unto the death" of heretics like Stephen was henceforth poured into mission work. Unresting, despite opposition and peril, in his labours, he began at Damascus, afterwards reaching Antioch, where the Greek name "Christian" was first applied,

¹ Acts xxiv. 5.

as a term of reproach, to the converts, and thence travelled through Asia Minor and certain parts of Greece ; finally, so runs a doubtful tradition, dying a martyr's death at Rome.

To this brief hint concerning the spread of the Christian religion it must suffice to add that its after history records how the disputes which divided the first disciples increased as time rolled on, riving its converts into countless sects fired by deathless hate ; how corruptions born of lingering Jewish and intruding pagan elements impaired the vigour which it drew from the inspiration of the spirit of Jesus ; and how what truth abode within it was foolishly made to stand or fall with notions about man and the universe which are utterly false.

Such matters interest us only as they help to explain the varying fortune which has, in common with that of other and older faiths, marked its course ; and, moreover, profit us only as we learn that its influence for good has lessened in the

degree that it has departed from, or made "a hedge" of rites and dogmas around, the simple teaching of Jesus.

That love of God, shewn forth in love of man, which was but a maxim of "repeaters" in his time, and to which all gave assent of lip, but few assent of life, was, so to speak, arrested in him and drew towards him the quenchless affection of the sinful and the suffering. This, more than all creeds about him, is the secret of an influence which, bounded by a few months and a narrow tract of country, has filled centuries since from east to west with adoring followers, and, despite their frightful quarrellings and slayings, kept aglow their ardour to serve and save their fellow-men. And if it moves us to like service, our life cannot be vain or harmful, because it will nourish and diffuse the spirit which, dwelling in high-souled men of other lands and ages, abode in rich measure in Jesus of Nazareth.

APPENDIX

NOTE A.

THE SEMITIC FAMILY.

THE various languages included under this term are a group of cognate dialects rather than a family of widely varied branches, and are commonly divided into the northern, or Aramaic; the Middle, or Hebraic; and the southern, or Arabic, as shown in the following table, which is copied from Professor Max Müller's *Lectures on Language*, vol. i., p. 450. . . .

OLD SEMITIC.		LIVING LANGUAGE.
Aramaic	Chaldee (Mesopotamia, Tid-mud, Tegum, Biblical Chaldee.)	
	Syriac (Peshito, second cent. A.D.) Cuneiform inscriptions of Babylon and Nineveh	Neo-Syriac
Hebraic	Political Hebrew	Dialects of the Jews
	Samaritan (Pentateuch) Carthaginian, Phoenician Inscriptions	
Arabic	Ethiopic or Gees	Dialects of Arabic
	Himyaritic Inscriptions	Amharic (Abyssinia) " " Bushi or Mabori (S. Arabia)

Chaldee is the name sometimes given to the dialects of Assyria and Babylon, which were adopted by the Jews during the captivity, not only for conversation, but as their literary language. The earliest records of it occur in the books of Ezra and Daniel, and it was probably the language of several of the Apocryphal books, although these have come down to us in Greek alone. Other relics are the Targums, or free translations of the Old Testament, and the Talmuds, while the untranslated sayings in the New Testament, attributed to Jesus, as *Tulitha kumi*, *Iphphatha*, *Abba*, *Eli*, *Eli*, *lama subachthani*, are Aramaic, then the vernacular of Palestine.

Syriac, or *Western Aramaic*, is still spoken in a corrupt form by certain tribes in Mesopotamia, and among the most

important specimens of it which are preserved is the Peshito version of the Bible, ascribed to the second century.

The *cuneiform*, like the Egyptian hieroglyph, has its origin in picture-writing, but lost its elaborate form through the desire and need for simplicity necessitated by the softer material on which, as contrasted with the Egyptian, it had to be traced. The signs were more easily indented on mud and clay slabs by sharp and straight strokes made with a triangular stylus (whence our word *style*), and then baked in the sun or by fire. Great ingenuity has been applied to their decipherment, and as the famous Rosetta stone, with its inscription in three languages, the hieroglyphic, demotic (chiefly phonetic), and Greek, supplied the key to the Egyptian picture-writing, so the inscription on the rocks at Behistun in Media, on which Darius Hystaspes relates his enterprises in three cuneiform characters, the Persian, Median, and Assyrian, rendered great service in unravelling the meaning of the queer wedge-shaped strokes which had been pronounced talismanic signs, symbols, and charms, and even as due to the destructive activity of worms!

Hebrew ceased to exist as a spoken tongue some four centuries B.C., but it remained, as it remains to this day, the sacred language of the Jews, and the study of the learned.

The *Samaritan* is an impure dialect of the Hebrew, having a very large admixture of Aramaic words. Its oldest monument is a version of the Pentateuch, of which an admirable account is given in Deutsch's *I.H. Remains*, pp. 404, *et. seq.*

Of the *Phoenician* but few traces survive, only inscriptions on coins and weights, on votive tablets, sacrificial stones, tombstones, and on sarcophagi (Deutsch, p. 155), the inscribed coffin of a king of Sidon being its chief monument.

Of the *Arabic* group, the most ancient

relics are the Himyaritic inscriptions, the date of which is unknown. Although the earliest documents are pre-Mohammedan, it was with the rise of Islam that Arabic became one of the richest literatures in the world, and, as the many words still employed in science show, the vehicle of learning, spreading over the civilised parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa.

NOTE B.

THE NAME JEHOVAH.

The peculiar feature of the Semitic languages is that the consonants are everything, and the vowels nothing, "every word consisting, in the first instance, merely of three consonants, which form, so to speak, the soul of the idea to be expressed by that word." And as in ancient times the consonants only were written, the name Jehovah appeared as J H V H. Its ancient pronunciation is lost, and, in the course of time, such awe and veneration had gathered round it that when the Jews came to it they substituted some other name, usually *Adonai*. Afterwards, when vowels were added to the Hebrew text, those in *Adonai*, or its phonetic form *I:donai*, were inserted between the letters of the sacred name, and thus J H V H was written Je Ho Va H. As already stated in the text, the original meaning of the name is most obscure. The explanation, "I AM THAT I AM," offered in the Old Testament (Exodus iii. 14), is only an attempt to explain a primitive name that had long since been unintelligible. Further, such explanation is the product of a religious-philosophical speculation, and far too abstract to be by any possibility correct. See *Encyclop. Biblica*. Art. "Names," Sect. III.

NOTE C.

THE TALMUD.

This huge *melange* consists of two parts: Mishnah, or text; and Gemara, or commentary on the text.

The *Mishnah* (from *shanah*, to repeat) is divided into the following sedairim or sections, which are subdivided into treatises and chapters or paragraphs:—

1. *Zeraim*, or *Seeds*, treating of Agriculture, the tithes and gifts due to the priests, Levites, and poor, and the forbidden mixtures in plants, animals, and garments.

2. *Moed*, or *Feasts*, of sabbaths, festivals

and fast days; the work forbidden, ceremonies and sacrifices ordained; special chapters being devoted to the principal feasts, as Passover, Tabernacles, etc.

3. *Nashim*, or *Women*; treating of marriage and divorce, etc.

4. *Nezikin*, or *Damages*; dealing with the civil and criminal law, and concluding with the famous ethical treatise, *Pirke Abot*, or "Sayings of the Fathers."

5. *Kadashim*, or *Sacred Things*; treating of sacrifices, etc., also of the dimensions of the Temple.

6. *Teharoth*, or *Purifications*.

"The *Mishnah*, being formed into a code, became in its turn what the Scripture had been, a basis of development and discussion. It had to be linked to the Bible, it became obscured by speculations, new traditions sprang up, new methods were invented, casuistry assumed its sway, and the *Gemara* ensued. A double *Gemara*: one, the expression of the schools in Palestine, called that of Jerusalem, redacted at Tiberias about 390 A.D., and written in what may be called East Aramaic; the other, redacted at Syra in Babylon, 365-427 A.D., and couched in Western Aramaic.....The Babylonian Talmud is about four times as large as that of Jerusalem." (Deutsch's *Library Remains*, Art. "Talmud," pp. 40, 41.)

In further explanation of the reference made at p. 51 to the necessity for translating the "Thorah" from the Hebrew into the vernacular, it may be added that these popular paraphrases, or free renderings, are known as *Targumim*, the reader and expounder being called the *meturgeman*, a name of which the word *dragonian*, applied to interpreters in the East, is a corruption.

In addition to the immense body of expositions of the Jewish scriptures embraced under the general term *Mishashim*, there arose a system of fanciful speculation based upon supposed hidden and mystical meanings in them, to which the name *Kabbalah* (from *kabal*, to "hand down") is given.

NOTE D.

THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

The Bible (from Greek *biblia*, "little books") is divided into two parts, called the Old and New "Testaments," or "covenants," *testamentum* being the Latin equivalent for the Greek *diatheke*,

"covenant." As stated at p. 32, the idea of a covenant made between Jehovah and their forefathers arose among the Israelites about the time of David, and the term was in due course applied to the books in which it was narrated. Christians accepted the Jewish scriptures in their entirety, and, when their own were placed by the side of them, called the former the "Old Testament," and the latter the "New," which not only prevented confusion, but implied a kind of connection, historical and doctrinal, between the two sets of documents.

Following the arrangement of the Vulgate, or Latin translation, which was itself copied from the Septuagint, the Old Testament consists of thirty-nine books, grouped in accordance with their general features, into historical (Genesis to Esther), poetical (Job to the Song of Solomon), and prophetic (Isaiah to Malachi). But among the Jews a more definite threefold division prevails—viz., the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings,¹ wherein the books are placed in different order and grouped into twenty-two,² so as to agree with the number of letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This division corresponds to the mode³ in which the whole was gradually collected—viz., of the Law by the scribe Ezra and his co-workers; of the Prophets, under the statesman Nehemiah; and of the Writings, during the Maccabean period, when the national independence quickened literary activity, and the memory of the destruction which the books narrowly escaped under Antiochus Epiphanes led to measures for their preservation.

The tradition current among the Jews before the time of Jesus, and accepted by Christians, was to the effect that the original manuscripts of their earlier scriptures were destroyed when the first temple was burnt, and that Ezra, as a "second Moses," made a recension, as it is called, of such copies as could be found, to which were afterwards added the books bearing his name and that of Nehemiah.

This tradition accords with the facts in so far as it gives Ezra credit for the collection of the "Law," but not so as implying that he was inspired by Jehovah to preserve writings said to contain the very words which that god had spoken to Moses. In

tracing the sources of history we saw how ancient records became in the course of time invested with a sacred character, and the veneration paid first to the "law," and then by degrees to the "prophets" and the "writings," has its counterpart in the notions of a divine origin which attach themselves to the scriptures of other religions than the Jewish and Christian, which have slowly arisen out of traditions, been fenced round with theories of verbal inspiration, and made the subject of endless commentaries.

The titles of each of the five books comprising the "Law," or "Pentateuch," as it is more often called,⁴ indicate the current belief, shared by Christians as well as by Jews, that Moses was their sole author; but no intelligent person who has looked even slightly into the matter can fail to note indications here and there of composite authorship. The many passages which refer to events long after the time of Moses suffice in themselves to show that, even if he were the author of the Pentateuch, additions have to be made to his work. But the most striking proof that it proceeds certainly from two, and probably from several, hands is in the frequent interchange of the names *Elohim* and *Jehovah* for the Deity. For example, in Genesis i. and ii. 1-3, *Elohim* (which is almost always translated "God") occurs thirty-five times, and *Jehovah* (which is always translated "LORD")⁵ not at all, while in the narrative of the journey of Abraham's servant to Haran (Gen. xxiv.) *Jehovah* occurs nineteen times, and *Elohim* not once.

This feature was noticed very many years ago, but was explained by assuming that Moses had a special reason for the alternate use of these names, and even Astruc, a French doctor, whose work, published in the middle of the last century, gave an impetus to critical study of the Pentateuch which has gone on with increasing vigour to this day, did not deny the common belief, but only suggested, as the title implies,⁶ that Moses had certain older documents before him which he worked into the story.

¹ From Greek *pentateuchos* = "five books in one volume."

² Gen. xii. 6, xiii. 7, xxxi. 31; Lev. xviii. 28; Deut. ii. 12; etc.

³ *Adonai* is printed "Lord."

⁴ *Conjectures sur les Mémoires originaux, dont il paroit que Moïse s'est servi pour composer le livre de la Genèse* (Bruxelles, 1753).

⁵ Cf. Prologue to *Ecclesiasticus*, where the first notice of this division occurs.

⁶ Josephus, *c. Apion.* i. 8.

⁷ See pp. 53, 57.

Scholars have been at immense pains to assign the Elohistic and Jehovahistic parts of the Pentateuch to their several authors. But the results, as might be expected in dealing with so mixed a document, are speculative, and, indeed, it is not settled which are the older portions, although those of the Elohist are generally so considered. But the broad fact abides of differences in style and aim which are explicable only on the theory of composite authorship.

Apart from the failure which, in view of the above facts, as well as of the lack of order, of needless repetitions, contradictions,¹ and impossible stories, attends any claim on behalf of the Pentateuch to historical accuracy and unity, there is the large admixture of legend which, hitherto, has been regarded as divine revelation concerning the creation of the universe, the primitive state of man, and the origin of sin and death in the world, and which is now found to stand in intimate connection with cognate legends in Chaldean records and Persian scriptures, while the serious matters with which it deals receive an altogether different, and either verified or verifiable, explanation from science.

Numberless books have been written in vain to prove that the accounts of the creation in the early parts of Genesis are in agreement with the discoveries of science concerning the origin and succession of life upon the earth; and the six "days" have been made to square with the vast periods demanded by geology, by contending that "days" really mean "ages," quite ignoring the fact that each "day" is said to have had a morning and an evening. But no ingenuity of reconcilers, fertile as that has been, can harmonise the statement in Gen. iii., that agony and death came into the world as the punishment of man's disobedience, with the evidence which the rocks beneath us supply of the existence of pain and struggling and death countless ages before man appeared. And in the ever-accumulating evidence from all quarters of the globe, inhabited once or habitable now, of the primitive condition of man, as one of savagery, the tribes still in that state representing not the degradation to which through the "fall" of a remote ancestor they have sunk, but the condition out of which all races above them have emerged, there is no harmony possible with

the declaration in Genesis that man was created in pristine purity, and placed amid luxurious surroundings. The abandonment of the statement in Scripture as to the position of the earth in space and its recent creation in time did not involve the surrender or negation of any fundamental dogma. But the admission that death raged in the world before man is fatal to the doctrine that it was the result of his disobedience, and with the denial of his "fall" the whole scheme of redemption as formulated in Christian theology is swept away. In place of the cheerless theory of divine purpose frustrated at the outset of man's career, and, assumed divine intervention notwithstanding, unaccomplished to this day, science gives us in the revelation of the wondrous advance which, despite local checks, man has accomplished, heart and hope to contribute to the realisation of what Jesus and like-minded men have meant by the "kingdom of God."

The Pentateuch remained the sole sacred book of the Jews long after its final redaction, for the primary object of the collection of the "prophets" and the "writings" was their preservation; and only by slow degrees did they acquire the divine authority which was accorded to the "law." There was doubtless a fairly general agreement of opinion concerning them, but the nature and contents of certain books—e.g., Ecclesiastes, in which the vanity of human life is asserted, and Esther, which is quite devoid of a religious spirit—led to much discussion as to their admission, and it was not until the end of the first century A.D. that the *canon* was settled. This Greek word, meaning a "straight rod" or "bar"—metaphorically, a "rule" or "model of excellence"—was in course of time applied to the books of the Bible as containing the rule of faith or truth; the "holy library," as Jerome called them.¹

Some use has been made in the foregoing pages of a number of uncanonical writings comprised under the general term "apocryphal," meaning "hidden," or "secret," given to them as containing hidden things, or as kept secret, or, in a later sense, as spurious. They were formerly inserted between the Old and New Testaments—a position which well indicates the light some of them throw on Jewish history from the period with which the Old Testament concludes; and,

¹ Cf. Gen. xxii. 14 with Exod. vi. 3; Exod. xx. 17 with Deut. v. 22; Numb. xxi. 35 with *ib.* xxxii. 39; etc.

¹ A convenient summary of the history of the Bible canon is given in Matthew Arnold's *God and the Bible*, p. 167, *et seq.*

although they are, on the whole, inferior to the canonical books, it is a pity that they no longer find a place in our authorised version, and are consequently so little known. They were probably composed during the first and second centuries before Jesus, and are of mixed origin, some being written in Palestine, as the valuable *First Book of Maccabees* and the *Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus*; others in Alexandria, as the *Wisdom of Solomon, Second Book of Maccabees*, and "the rest of the chapters of the" *Book of Esther*; while several bear traces of Persian influence, as *Baruch the Prophet*, the *Book of Tobit* (or *Tobit*), the third and fourth books of *Esdras* (or *Ezra*), and the *Song of the Three Children*, etc. The Church of England speaks of them in her Articles of Religion as "read for example of life and instruction of manners, but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine."

NOTE E.

THE LEGEND OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH.

In the foregoing pages the birth of Jesus is dealt with as a natural event. In the Epistles, some of which were written before the Gospels, there is no mention of a supernatural birth. Mark, the earliest of the Gospels, is silent about it; so is John; and it is incredible that if either of these writers, or whoever may be the authors of the documents bearing their names, had heard the report that Jesus was born of a virgin, they should not have recorded it. The story, as given in Matthew (chap. i., 18-21), differs from the version given in Luke (chap. i., 26-35). Matthew says that Joseph, puzzled at finding his espoused wife pregnant, had his natural suspicions dispelled by the appearance of an angel to him in a dream, telling him that the son which Mary would bring forth "is conceived in her of the Holy Ghost." Luke says that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and announced to her that she should conceive and bring forth a son, whose name was to be Jesus; and when she asked how such a thing could happen to a virgin, she is told that the Holy Ghost will come upon her and the power of the Highest overshadow her; "therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

Matthew, whose Gospel was addressed chiefly to the Jews, among whom, as has been shown (*ante*, pp. 39, 62, 78), the Messi-

anic hope ran strong, comments on the event as a fulfilment of a prophecy in *Isaiah* (chap. vii., 14) that "a virgin should bring forth a son who would be called Emmanuel."

On the slight and sandy foundation of two short and conflicting accounts, that of Matthew seeking justification in a mis-translated prophecy, the Christian Church built, in later centuries, the dogma of the Incarnation. To state this fact would, seemingly, suffice to disprove the dogma; but it is necessary to summarise the reasons for which it must be rejected, because of the tenacity with which popular preachers cling to the veracity of the Gospel narratives; and because educated theologians, in admitting the historical difficulties, seek warrant for the dogma in that somewhat vague faculty claimed as the "Christian consciousness." This, in Mr. F. C. Conybeare's words, "makes the subjective convictions of a later age the test of historical truth and discards in their favour the methods of historical research" (*Guardian*, March 18th, 1903). The historical evidence is of the flimsiest. To return to the first chapter of Matthew, we have the miraculous birth story prefaced by the genealogy of Jesus in direct line from Abraham through forty-two generations, and ending thus: "And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ." In an old Syriac Codex of Mount Sinai, discovered a few years ago, the verse just quoted reads as follows: "Jacob begat Joseph; Joseph, to whom was betrothed Mary the Virgin, begat Jesus, who is called Christ." And the word "virgin" given in the passage from *Isaiah* is a mistranslation, which eminent Hebraists, of the type of the late Dr. A. B. Davidson, disingenuously suffer to remain unaltered (see his edition of "Isaiah" in the *Temple Bible*), and without comment. The Hebrew *almah*, mistranslated "virgin," is given in the Septuagint as *parthenos*—virgin, whence, perhaps, the source of the blunder in Matthew, the Septuagint being used by the writers of the New Testament, and by the Jews generally. *Almah* means "a young woman of marriageable age," and the prophet probably had in his mind some maiden to whom his words applied.¹ The author of Matthew's Gospel,

¹ In *Les prophètes* (vol. i., p. 233) Dr. Reuss acutely asks: "What consolation would Ahaz have had if the prophet had said to him, Do not fear these two kings, because in seven hundred and fifty years the Messiah will be born?"

be it remembered, wrote in "an age when every betrothed maiden aspired to be the mother of the Messiah."

To what shifts modern theologians of liberal tendencies are put in seeking to account for the story is shown in Dr. Sanday's supposition that "Luke had a special source of information connected with the court of the Herods, perhaps through Joanna, wife of Chuza, the king's steward." And, further, "the story entered into the common faith slowly and by degrees, and by a channel that was apparently private rather than public" (*Guardian*, February 4th, 1903). In this our ingenious apologist sees an explanation of the "partial silence of the apostolic age." But how can he account for the silence of the apostle John, who had lived with the Virgin Mary as his mother, and the tendency of whose entire Gospel is to emphasise the divine nature of Jesus as the Eternal Logos? The reference in John to the family connections of Jesus imply purely human relations. See chaps. vi. 42; vii 5; 42. As Mr. Conybeare cogently points out in an article in the *Daily Chronicle*, June 22nd, 1904: "The disciples and contemporaries of Jesus regarded Joseph as his human father, and the apostles themselves knew no better. His miraculous birth was a family secret, never divulged by his mother until Paul and his fellow-workers were dead and gone. It is a fact that the early Church of Judea pointedly denied the virgin birth; that the Acts of Pilate, the most popular of early apocryphs, tacitly reject it; that the Acts of Thomas, another early and popular apocryph, declare Jesus and St. Thomas to have been twin brothers; and, lastly, that for two hundred years after Christ Christian minorities everywhere continued to deny the miracle."

The fact is, as stated in the article on "Jesus" in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, that, in dealing with the story of the Virgin Birth, "we unquestionably enter the circle of pagan ideas." There is a universal tendency to credit men of renown, and especially spiritual leaders, founders of religions, as Jesus, Buddha, and Zoroaster, who seem to ordinary mortals to have intimate relations with the divine, with the possession of superhuman qualities which must be of supernatural origin. "The gods have come down in the likeness of men" is the popular cry; and they must have "come down" in some exceptional way, not being born as other men.

Of this tendency there are abundant illustrations. The mythologies of India, Persia, China, Egypt, Mexico, and other lands, yield their stories of the virgin birth of the god or of deified man; while along the line of the lower culture we find numerous examples of barbaric superstition as to the several modes of conception, in which things both animate and inanimate play active and fantastic parts. And when we remember how the Oriental mind, seeking solution of the problem of man's relation to the infinite, formulated theories of incarnation (to say nothing of re-incarnations), the question suggests itself how far such doctrines may have filtrated westward, taking the abstruse form given to them in the Gospel of John and later mystic literature.

For examples of the "Supernatural Birth," see Hartland's *Legend of Perseus* (three vols., David Nutt), also cf. J. M. Robertson's *Christianity and Mythology*, pp. 168, 202, 317; *Pagan Christs*, pp. 331, 338, 356 (Watts); Lecky's *History of European Morals*, vol. i., p. 105 (Longmans); and Draper's *History of Intellectual Development in Europe*, vol. i., p. 73 (Bell & Sons). In his recently-issued *Virgin Birth of Christ*, Professor Lobstein arrives at the conclusion that under the solvent of criticism "the tradition of the miraculous birth of Jesus vanishes away, or, rather, resolves itself into a myth created by popular devotion and destined to explain the divine sonship of Christ by his supernatural generation" p. 110 (1903). Like all theological writers, Professor Lobstein is either ignorant of, or ignores, the evidence from anthropology in support of his conclusions. A rather extensive correspondence on the Virgin Birth appeared in the *Guardian* during February and March, 1903; and a review of Professor Lobstein's work, as also of a kindred work by Dr. Soltau, in the same paper, under date of April 27th, 1904. Therein the reviewer admits the serious historical difficulties, and falls back on "metaphysical presuppositions." See also an excellent paper on the subject by Mr. Slade Butler in the *Nineteenth Century*, August, 1904.

NOTE F.

THE GOSPELS.

The early Christians had no New Testament, and the idea that one day the traditions and stray documents relating to Jesus and

certain letters of his apostles would be gathered into a book as a sacred and inspired canon like the Old Testament never entered their heads.

Confining our remarks to the four gospels, the earliest definite testimony that we have to their existence is from Irenæus, who wrote in the latter part of the second century (about the year 180) to this effect :—

"Matthew it was who, among the Hebrews, brought out in their own language (the Aramaic) a written gospel, when Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and founding the Church. Then, after their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, he, too, delivered to us in writing what Peter preached ; and Luke, moreover, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by Paul. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who also lay on his breast, John, too, published his gospel, living at that time at Ephesus, in Asia."

Irenæus then indulges his fancy in finding mystic meanings in this number of four ; "as there are four zones of the world and four winds, plainly the Church must have four columns, and from them must come forth four blasts," etc.

Passing by Justin Martyr, who was born A.D. 89 and lived to the age of seventy-six, and who, although he appears to quote from what he calls "Memoirs of the Apostles," never speaks of the gospels by name, the only testimony prior to Irenæus is that of Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, who flourished in the first half of the second century, and possibly had known the apostle John. His writings are lost, but Eusebius (third century), after calling him "a man of shallow understanding," quotes him as mentioning two gospels — first, that Mark wrote *memorabilia* (acts and words) of the life of Jesus, derived from the apostle Peter ; and, second, that Matthew wrote a collection of sentences (*logia*) in "the Hebrew tongue" — that is, in Aramaic or Syro-Chaldaic, "which each one has translated as he could."

Beyond this slender information concerning the origin of writings on which Christians have for centuries set such store as the "Word of God," all is dim with impenetrable mist, rendering futile the ceaseless discussion about the authorship, and, as regards the synoptics, the relative order of the gospels, since none doubt that the fourth gospel was the latest.

The writer of the gospel of Matthew

clearly intended his work for Jewish converts, and is ever on the alert to show that the foretellings of Hebrew prophets about a Messiah were fulfilled in detail in Jesus, whom he exhibits as preaching the "good news of the kingdom," and as proving his divine mission by miracles.

Mark, the shortest, and probably the earliest, of the four lives, was compiled for the use of Gentile Christians, before whom it sets the leading events in the career of Jesus with detail and small embellishment.

The author of the third gospel admits at the outset that he proposes to make a recension of the many existing memoirs of Jesus, and this he does in a style of much beauty and vividness.

The fourth gospel, over the authorship of which stormy disputes are still waged, is altogether unlike the synoptics both in matter and manner. Omitting much which they narrate, as the birth, the baptism, the temptation, the agony in Gethsemane, the discourses "on the mount," those concerning the second advent and earthly kingdom, and the clear precepts which "he who runs may read" in pithy saying or delightful parable ; it gives us prolix harangues full of mystic talk, of self-analysis, and lofty pretensions ; long prayers and wearisome controversies. Instead of a plain and simple story, it is an essay in which Jesus is merely a lay figure, into whose mouth are put certain doctrines which had arisen about him through the intermixture of Hebrew and Greek speculation on Egyptian soil.

But the spirit of love that permeates it is the spirit of Jesus, and in such stories as that of his meeting with a woman of Samaria the essence of his teaching is expressed in the words, "an hour comes and now is when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is spirit ; and they that worship must worship in spirit and truth."

John is known to have lived for some years after the death of Jesus, and it may be that the germ of this gospel is in certain well-remembered sayings of the Master which the apostle in his old age, and perhaps with confused additions incident to lapse of time, repeated to men ignorant of current traditions in the other gospels — ignorant, too, of Jewish customs and places, who steeped what he told them in the thoughts of later times and of a foreign land, blurring for ever the portrait of Jesus of Nazareth.

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